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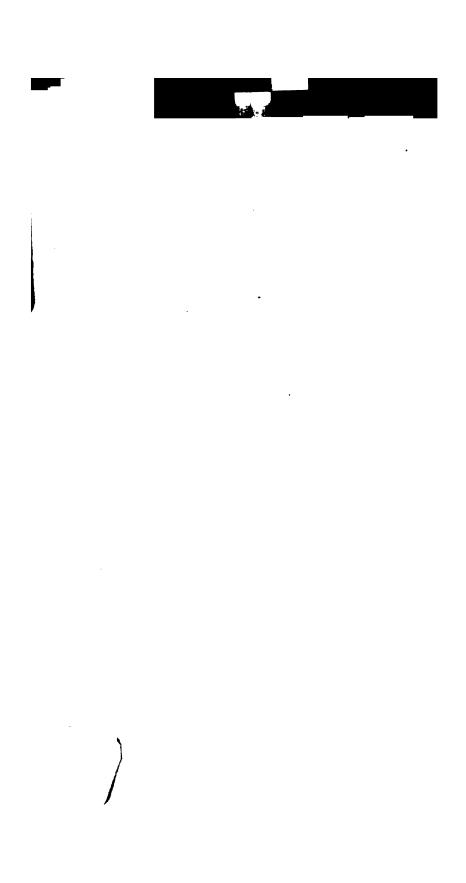
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THIS MARRYING MARGARET CULKIN BANNING

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BY

MARGARET CULKIN BANNING





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CHAPTER I

YOU should have been a bridesmaid," said Aunt Caroline. "Everyone was so surprised that you weren't. And the yellow would have been so becoming with you so dark."

Horatia smiled and her smile carried no regrets for her lost opportunity. Everyone, as her aunt said, had been surprised at her refusal to be a bridesmaid at the wedding of her friend. But with a quick reminiscent glance back at the ceremony, Horatia congratulated herself again on the decision that had held out against the requests of Edna and the expostulations of her aunt. She recalled the hurried fussy little ceremony, and the curious people, the space reserved in the front parlor with its tall cathedral candles, its lavish ten yards of white satin ribbon and the rose pink prayer rug. A faint odor of candles and coffee and perfume clung to the memory. In the minds of her aunt and West Park these things were vastly suitable, just as to them Edna Wallace was still her "best" friend, because they had played together as children and gone through High School together. But Horatia realized that

her college experience and her four years of absence from West Park had made great gaps between her and the bride of last night as well as between her and this middle-aged aunt and uncle with whom she sat at breakfast. She looked just then as if not only yellow but any color would become her. She was fairly tall and well made and carried herself with the easy distinctive swing that comes from perfect health and no corsets. Her hair was brown and heavy and shaded into the brown of her eyes to add still another tone to the whole that her aunt characterized as "you so dark." Her clothes were simple for she scorned on principle all the minor affectations of dress and quick changes of fashion, but she had an eye for color and line which developed gowns which were sometimes beautiful and sometimes startling. Not that there was an unlimited number of them. Uncle George was generous but generous by West Park standards and by Aunt Caroline's expenditures. and Aunt Caroline still considered fifty dollars a scandalous price for a suit or cloak. Horatia never grumbled about money or about clothes. This morning she was dressed for the City and her satin blouse and slim tailored suit set off her young health perfectly. Even her aunt and uncle were conscious of fresh energy at the breakfast table.

"I didn't want to be a bridesmaid," she answered. "It always makes me seasick to try to walk to music."

"Horatia's waiting," said Uncle George, over the top of his newspaper, "until she can be the chief performer."

Horatia smiled at him. "You want to get rid of me, don't you, and you don't care what I take. I'll tell you what I am going to do. I'm going to town this morning to get a job. When I try that for a while I'll decide whether I want to get married or not."

"Get a job? What do you want a job for? You want to stay home with your aunt and me now." Uncle George went so far as to put his paper down and repeat himself. "What do you want to do that for?"

"Earn money."

He reached for his check book in all seriousness, but Horatia leaned over and put her hand on it.

"Truly I want to earn it. Everyone earns money nowadays, unless she is feeble-minded—or married. I don't particularly want money just now anyway. I still have some of that last fifty. But I want to work. All the people I know are either married or going to be or working. I must get in some class. Of course I don't mean to leave you. I'd be here nights, you see."

"They'd probably find a position for you at the High School if you feel that way," said Aunt Caroline, with the consciousness of being an important member of the community to whom even educational gateways were glad to open. "Oh—teach," said Horatia. "I don't want to teach!"

Uncle George rose with heavy dignity.

"Well—let me know when you get broke." He went out of the room with masculine indifference to these whims and in the knowledge that Horatia was only marking time in her own way until the inevitable happened. She'd marry. Of course she'd marry. And chuckling a little, he went down the street.

Aunt Caroline was more inquiring. She rose from the table, not being one to linger and keep the "help" waiting. But she followed her niece into the hall.

"Is it this social work you want to do?" she asked, remembering dimly things she had heard of new standpoints.

"Why, I don't think so. I thought I'd try to get on a newspaper. And if that doesn't work, I cut some ads out of the paper."

"You don't mean you'd do housework!" gasped her aunt to whom advertisements in newspapers meant "girl wanted for general housework."

Horatia laughed in pure joy. It was one of those rare free moments which come at the beginning of new work and new adventures and she enjoyed shaking up Aunt Caroline.

"Not—especially." Then from the foot of the steps she turned to wave back at the stout lady on the doorstep.

"Don't fret," she called. "Home for dinner." "Everyone," she sang to herself as she went

down the hill, "has the right to shock an older person once in a while. It's the breath of youth. And the old dears really love it. So long as you are respectable—they love it."

As she turned the corner she looked back for a moment at the house she had left, dramatizing her new freedom and the house too as a sober symbol of what she was so gladly leaving. The Grant house stood high on a hill overlooking the lake. It was built of blackish stone, which at one time had been the material of wealth and dignity in the city, and it still looked down on the stucco and plaster new houses which clustered beneath it, with a kind of glum faith in its superiority. But the illusion was its own. It awed no one any more, least of all Horatia, who had been brought up to respect it.

Inside were rooms papered in browns and streaked green and filled with walnut furniture which had all the ugliness of an ugly out-worn fashion and yet none of the interest of antiques. There were several unsoftened leather sofas—unsoftened because the Grants had never been a family to "lie down in the daytime," and the chairs were chairs—so many places to sit down, but boasting neither beauty nor comfort. At the windows curtains of imitation Brussels lace gave the finishing touch to the unimaginative furnishings. They too were stiff and artificial, like the stone dog who sat so grimly on the terrace outside. Horatia had called the place home since she was six years old. She had no quarrel with

it but it had ceased to interest her. It stood still—impassive—and she, like the breeze and the sunlight, was moving.

It was a clear morning—a bright morning, one of the days on which someone always should start out to seek a fortune. There was energy in the wind and good luck in the sunlight and romance in the face of everyone she met. Even on the way to the suburban train, though she knew nearly everyone she met, they all seemed imbued with new spirit and more interesting qualities. She met Miss Pettikin, and saw not the shabby little dressmaker but the heroine of some blighted romance. She saw the Reverend Williams, not as the man who had read the marriage service so stupidly the night before but as a man with a holy mission. She saw Joe Peter, the neighborhood gardener, and he became Labor just as Mr. Jeffry panting on his way to the train became Capital. She saw herself as a lovely and interesting young woman in whom everyone on the train was interested and she hoped that behind every newspaper lurked a man with a brain. worth her knowing. The world was full of life and interest and she was going to get her share of it. And as the train swayed and jerked as only a suburban train can do, she pulled out her notebook and speculated on her first adventure.

She had listed the newspapers with their addresses. There were four and it was quite within possibility that one of them would want her. She had several courses in journalism to her credit at

the university and if there was a vacancy in any office she meant to press her claims hard. The mere idea of working stimulated her and as the train stopped at the city station she pushed out with the hurrying crowd, almost feeling already that she was one of those to whom being "on time" was a necessity.

The newspaper offices were down near the water-front. Below the main street of big shops and glittering restaurants, the streets became grey and businesslike. Wholesale houses, impassive and undecorated, with great trucks backed up before their entrances, dingy employment offices, the repair shops of garages that fronted gaily on the other street, and straggly buildings, without elevators, housing a multitude of little businesses, lived on this street. A block above, the streets were already filled with shoppers, looking in windows, loitering along, wondering what they would do next. But on Market Street everyone seemed to know where he was going and to be going there quickly. Horatia hastened her own footsteps, though her time was all her own. It made her feel less conspicuous.

The Times was the morning paper and the presence of it on the breakfast table all her life made Horatia feel more acquainted with it than with the others. Besides her picture had appeared in it three times after she had done something worth newspaper notice at the University, and while she was vaguely amused at those reasons for going there first she argued further that

as it was the paper with the largest circulation there might be more opportunities open. Its dinginess surprised her. The offices were housed in a nondescript wooden building and the manager's office to which Horatia found herself referred by the boy in the general office was reached by a worn stairway.

"He's probably not in yet," said the boy, "doesn't get here until eleven o'clock, usually."

But Horatia's luck was working. A stout, shirt-sleeved man looked her over without getting up from his desk.

"We don't take on women reporters except in the society department," he told her. "There's to be a change there shortly. What experience have you had?"

"No experience except journalism courses at the University."

"They can't teach newspaper work at any university," growled the man. "Can teach them more here in a week than they'd get in ten years at any school, don't care where it is. Leave your name and if anything does turn up, or Miss Eliot—she's society editor—needs help—I'll have her take it up with you. Of course you understand she wants hack work. We've no room for essays, you know."

Horatia looked him over without a blush at his semi-insolence.

"No—I don't suppose you have," she said, and her stock went up with her tone. She left her

name on the pad he pushed towards her and went out.

"Lucky there are three others," she said. "I wouldn't care for that gentleman—nor yet his Miss Eliot. But I suppose you can't choose. The Buzz-saw next."

The Buzz-saw was not subscribed to by the Grants. It was a murderous little political journal, full of gossip, and it exposed scandals rather than printed news. Its circulation was heavy and stray copies of it, brought home by Uncle George, had made Horatia wonder a good deal about it. She knew everyone read it, more or less under cover, and its unorthodoxy troubled her not at all. If it were rotten it would be fun to uncover its methods. So she toiled up another flight of stairs into a much smaller office where the editor, a typist and two lean, pipe-smoking reporters looked furtively amused at her appearance. She took the scrutiny well. Ouite unembarrassed in her own glances, she had a way of putting herself in her own class immediately. It was impossible to look at her, at her dress and her unaffected hat, and not know that she meant to be quite impersonal. The reporters took their pipes to the other corner and the editor straightened up a little to offer her a chair and ask her business. When she told him he seemed to ruminate.

"What is your name?"

She told him and he seemed to connect it with Uncle George by a swift mental gesture.

"George Grant—dry-goods?"
"His niece. I live with him."

"Well." He thought again and then leaned forward with a confidential air that Horatia imagined him using habitually as he unearthed his scandals.

"We don't take on girls. But I don't say you couldn't be useful to us. If you could run a column of good gossipy stuff about the swells—particularly the women, of course. Nothing that would let us in for libel—well, I'd edit it anyway, of course. But the preliminary stuff to these scandals—the first rumors of divorces and elopements—particularly concerning women more or less in the public eye. We don't want stories about everyone. I could give you a list of people to watch. You know—the Town Topics sort of thing. Get us a lot more women readers."

Horatia was enjoying herself.

"But how would I unearth these stories about

people I don't know?"

"You'd have to work around. A girl like you has got the—" (he fumbled and decided to be a plain American) "the entry everywhere. You'd feel around, listen to them talk, draw them out. There's things a man can't do."

"Yes," agreed Horatia, wisely, "there are."

"Now of course a thing like that would be a trial column. Might not work out at all. Couldn't be long-winded. And then, too, it isn't worth an awful lot. But a girl like you, living at home, doing it for experience and pin-money,

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would realize that we couldn't pay too much."

His little eyes bored through her as he tried to feel her out. Horatia felt suddenly disgusted.

"I'll think it over," she said, getting to her feet.
"I'm not sure I could do just what you want, but
I'll think it over. And come in in a day or so."

The man seemed a little anxious to keep her and vaguely worried lest he had said too much.

"Our little journal tries to tell the truth," was his parting comment and it followed Horatia sardonically down the stairs.

"You're not an adventure," thought Horatia, proceeding. "You're a nasty, open debauch. My chances are narrowing."

They narrowed further. The Evening Reporter was cleaner than the other two, more brusque, more businesslike. She could not see the editor. They needed no one. There remained the Evening Journal and that Horatia hardly knew by sight. She had bought a copy at the newsstand the other day when she was getting addresses and making her plans. It was a thinner sheet than the others and seemed to have a great deal of space for semi-philosophical editorials. A kind of labor journal she classified it and then felt that she had not been complete. It had hinted at Socialism but it was not Socialist frankly. Horatia knew the strong colors of Socialist publications, to a couple of which she subscribed, just as a matter of being open-minded.

There was no buzz or stir about the office of The Journal. It was high up in a kind of office

building which fronted the lake, and its rooms seemed to be very few. In one a couple of typewriting machines with papers strewn about them were deserted. In the adjoining room, open in spite of a "private" sign on the door, a big desk was also deserted. At the back of the room a big window gave on the lake, ignoring the rush and noise of the brown streets below. Horatia looked around for someone and seeing nobody went to the window. She stood there, a little tired and reflective, thinking of the queerness of being in such a spot instead of in some big classroom or lecture hall or in the sedate comfort of West Park. The adventure spirit was wearving a little. What sort of places were these to see and feel life in? And how tawdry or how conventional one might become. She thought of Edna, speeding away with her husband on some luxurious train and wondered how she was feeling today. Suddenly she herself felt lonely and ignored. No one really cared where she was or what she was doing. It was glorious to be free but it would be She did not finish the thought, for someone came into the office and at the sound of his step she hurriedly turned to confront business or furtiveness or whatever might be there. She saw a tall man of about thirty-five with a lean face and slow, observing, cynical eyes.

"I am sorry you found the office deserted. I am Langley, the editor. What can I do for you? If it's books, I don't buy books. If it's subscriptions. I can't afford it."

"It's a job," said Horatia.

"For me or you?" asked the man with a lazy smile. She liked his voice. It was well-bred. He was well-bred too and there was something vaguely familiar about his name.

"You've got one," she countered.

He smiled neither in assent nor dissent.

"And you want one?"

"On a newspaper."

"There are more substantial sheets than this one, you know."

He spoke pleasantly and Horatia felt suddenly expansive and ready to talk.

"I've been to them all. One won't have me, another wants me possibly to do society personals, and another wants me to run a spicy scandal column for them."

"So they would. But as fourth fiddle I've nothing much better to offer, I'm afraid. I don't need reporters, which I suppose is what you are hankering for, nearly as much as other ingredients for this paper."

"I'm sorry," said Horatia. "I'd like to work next to this view."

"That's why I took the office. I thought that too. But I can't put the things that view tells me across with the public."

"They would be pleasant things," said Horatia. She was interested and meant to find out as much as she could about this man and his queer paper. And she felt in him a willingness to prolong the conversation. To test it, she turned to go.

"Good morning," she said brightly. "Again I'm sorry."

"It's too bad. Will you give up the journalistic life now that the Big Four have offered you so infinitely less than nothing?"

"I suppose I'll have to."

"Have you done any of it yet? I beg your pardon for the question, which, not being a prospective employer, I haven't any right to ask. Don't answer if you don't like."

"I don't mind. I've done no work—of any kind. Just raw—out of college."

"University?"

She nodded and at the word the train of association became complete. Langley—of course—the 1905 Langley, who had been the big man in his day and left a train of college glory behind him that even yet was not obliterated by the hundreds of more recent graduates. He had begun the student government—but possibly it was not the same one. She was sure she hadn't better ask him.

"Isn't it odd," he was saying, "how many college graduates think they can reform the world just by getting on a newspaper? They think such foolish things—that papers are forums of opinions—that they can write things they want to write. My dear young lady, a newspaper is only a medium for advertisers, that is, if it's successful."

"But I know that," answered Horatia, "perfectly. I'm quite practical about it. And I don't

want to reform the world. I want to live right in it. I'm not the least bit of a reformer. I rather like the world."

She looked so engagingly young and sweet and sensible that the man's face brightened—almost involuntarily, as if he did not want it to brighten.

"You're a romanticist, young lady."

"I started out this morning from an ugly stone house on a lovely hill to seek my fortune. There was only one trouble. No one put any obstacles in my way and no one knew I was going to seek it really. The people I told didn't understand. You're the first person who has begun to talk to me, so I told you. And I'm getting too expansive. But I feel much better."

"I wish I could give you a job, young adventurer," answered the man, a little irrelevantly. "You might bring back some of the enthusiasm I had when I was as young as you are. But I was more solemn."

"Oh, I can be solemn on occasion," said Horatia. She was having a tremendously good time, talking to this man who didn't know her name and to whom it was so easy to talk. And he too was warming to the conversation.

"You see, I haven't much of a newspaper. Three of us run it and we don't do our own printing. There is one man who had hopes as I did. There is another who drinks too much—when he writes well—and writes badly when he drinks too little. We started out to make a newspaper which would not muck-rake, you know, but tell

the truth about things. And we find, dear young lady, that nobody wants us. Even you wouldn't

want a job from us."

"I truly think I would," said Horatia. "Don't you want a woman's department? I really would enjoy doing society personals for a paper with a purpose."

He laughed uproariously and she noticed how

young he could look.

"Will you come to lunch and talk it over? I'll tell you all about it—hopes and failures, young lady adventurer."

"If I can pay for my own lunch."

He bowed, then added with a twinkle:

"Of course we aren't absolutely down to bed-

rock. I could pay for your lunch."

"But it's easier for me to beg for a job if I'm paying for my own. My name is Horatia Grant, Mr. Langley."

"Miss Grant," said Langley, holding the door open, "no matter who pays for it, I am going to

enjoy my lunch."

CHAPTER II

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I was an amazingly pleasant lunch. Horatia was not too sophisticated in this matter of eating with men in public restaurants and under the flattering charm of Jim Langley's interest and attention she sparkled with excitement and response. She liked him. She liked his easy careless manners and his half-mocking, half-kind indulgence towards her remarks and the real amusement in his smile and the skill he showed in ordering food. And Langley across from her. along with his faint note of self-mockery, showed that he enjoyed himself too, for Horatia's face was young and her mind was clear and above all she did not seem tired but fresh and vigorous. He asked her about herself, subtly keeping the conversation on her, and she told him of the house on the hill and her married sister and her aunt and uncle and the neighbors.

"They are kind, you know," she finished, "but they are so simple that they all call me intellectual and set me apart as queer."

"And you aren't queer at all," said Langley, "you're a perfect product of what the nice clean-liness of West Park would produce with a college education superimposed on it. Why don't you leave things alone, young lady? Your realities may be stupid but they are clean and straight.

Why do you want to get tangled up and wrinkled up? Wouldn't the West Park High School perhaps be a better solution than the newspaper? Or a good husband?"

She smiled at him.

"You smile now but later you'll be sorry. You think you know about troubles because you've studied sociology and heard a lot of war lecturers. But you really are quite untouched. And life hurts. Even in West Park it must hurt, but in a city, in work—it probably will hurt much more. And besides the world isn't the place it used to be, with clean-cut issues and a welcome for the young romanticist. It is worn with war, and very tired and a bit unscrupulous and there are no ideals left which haven't been tampered with——"

"But we have to live in it just the same," argued Horatia.

"You might enter a convent." At which they both laughed, for it was so absurd to think of Horatia in a convent.

"Your people will probably object to your taking a job on my paper," said Langley at length; "maybe you will when you hear more about me. I can't pay you enough to make it worth your while financially. But perhaps if you want to come and will take the work I can give you and try to increase our circulation, I can find a desk for you anyway." And having committed himself, the editor looked as if he were calling himself a fool in his thoughts.

"I'll work for anything you'll pay me," said Horatia, "and I don't think anyone can frighten me away from your paper, Mr. Langley. When can I come?"

"Good luck to begin on Monday."

"I shall be at the office on Monday morning," she promised, with a thrill, a young thrill in her voice.

She left the restaurant with all the spirit of the morning reinforced. Friday—Saturday—Sunday—then she would be at work. It wasn't hard to find work. She would try very hard to make what she wrote interesting and possibly soon people would be buying the newspaper to read what she had written, and Langley would say—even so do fresh college graduates dream. But the college graduate of ten years back walked back to the office over the lake and told Bob Brotherton apropos of nothing that there was always a new way in which to make a damned fool of oneself.

What he was to do with her, why he had taken on an added responsibility just when The Journal seemed on its last legs were doubtless sufficiently irritating questions. But more irritating must have been the flare-up of impulsiveness, the response to youth and romance, which he had been deliberately trying to deaden in himself and which he had hoped were permanently deadened. He had waded through realism and discouragements to a kind of refusal to care about anything more and here he was lending a hand to

someone who would go through the same weary mess. She would be far better off in her stupid suburbanism. Someone would marry her and use the youth and the freshness to decorate another suburban home somewhere. She shouldn't be encouraged. The persistence of the devil that had made all that old stuff leap up in him again!

Horatia went on to Maud's. Maud was her sister, who had married to the full approbation of West Park and her own satisfaction. It came upon Horatia in the midst of her excitement at the beautiful way things were turning out that she was sorry for people who couldn't have all this interest in their lives and particularizing she discovered a localized regret that Maud's life wasn't more colorful. She hadn't seen her sister often that summer. Maud's two babies had come close together, and on the advent of the second they had moved from their first apartment to a house on one of the city boulevards, which pleased Aunt Caroline immensely. Horatia had been in the house only once or twice, for Maud brought the children to West Park on Sundays and that had been almost enough sisterly intercourse for Horatia. But now she wanted to spread out her inspiration and she turned her steps towards Elm Boulevard.

It was a newly-built section of the city which took great pride in its residential restrictions and its extremely up-to-date houses of brick or stucco, each of them representing a vague travesty on some architectural period or "style." The sleek, small lawns were chopped off neatly, one from another, by little hedges which were not too high to hide any of the beauties or improvements of the place from the passing motorist. Well polished cars stood in front of some of the houses, children in smocked frocks and gaily colored half-socks played in the lawn-swings or walked up and down the sidewalks. It was mid-afternoon and the comfortable-prosperous were enjoying themselves. Horatia felt the still orderliness of the atmosphere and realized again why Aunt Caroline was given to occasional remarks about how "well Maud had done."

She turned in at her sister's house and Maud, who was sitting on the porch with her baby in her arms, jumped up to welcome her volubly and to introduce her to two other ladies as cool and plump and white-clad as Maud herself.

"Did you walk out this wretchedly hot day—all the way from town?"

Horatia had not felt the heat but she put a suddenly self-conscious hand up to her hair and hat under her sister's solicitous inquiry. She found she was hot and moist beside these cool suburban ladies.

"I am hot," she admitted. "May I go up and wash?"

The inside of the house was pleasanter than she had remembered. It was cool, its shades were drawn against the heat. Clean, pretty colors everywhere, and as she passed the children's room the whiteness and pinkness of it charmed her. She went down to the porch refreshed and admiring. Even if the Williams had chosen this location where there was no lake view and the houses were rather closely set, it had distinct advantages. She told Maud so and Maud was obviously greatly pleased.

"I knew I was right in insisting on this part of town," she said. "A lake view is all right and so is the country. But unless you have oodles of money and three or four cars and a regular estate it is much better to settle in one of the good residence districts."

"What makes a residence district good?" asked Horatia, quizzically, though she knew perfectly well.

The three suburban ladies looked a little shocked.

"Why the people, the people who live here. This district is restricted. You can't build houses here that cost less than twelve thousand. That keeps out undesirables."

"I see," said Horatia, waiving her rights to controversy.

"Of course, with growing children," began Maud in an instructive matronly tone.

Growing children, it appeared, were all important to the three ladies. Horatia dropped out of the conversation but kept a look of bright intelligence focused on her informants. Growing children must be carefully watched and not allowed to make acquaintances among those whose residence districts were not restricted. They

"picked up everything." They were the subject of a long conversation which went from schools to carrots. The interest of the three ladies never flagged. Horatia held the baby in her lap and played with its wisps of hair, hardly attending to what was said. She vaguely heard the talk pass from undesirable children to undesirable mothers and the voices became more tense. The names were nothing to her and she was in no mood to combat the intolerances of the others. The baby was so small and pink and clean and desirable. Maud must have a lot of fun. must be fun to share children with a man-She heard a familiar name and broke off her thoughts abruptly. What was that they were saying?

"She was seen downtown having lunch with that Jim Langley—and you know what he is."

"Oh, she doesn't care what she does," said Maud. "Whatever happened between her and her husband—do you know?"

"They say that after their baby died, she refused flatly to have any more—and you know how men are. If a woman can't be tactful about those things and the way she feels—she said outrageous things about not being able to endure more such suffering. And yet when the child was alive she was hardly ever home."

"That's the way with those women," said Maud sagely.

"And then running around with Jim Langley---" The sick little feeling in Horatia grew acute. She had heard the name rightly.

"Who's the pernicious gentleman?" she asked

lightly enough.

"Jim Langley—no one you ought to know." Maud was quick to adopt the tone of chaperonage.

"But I should know all about him," persisted Horatia, easily, "because he's just given me a job."

There was a dangerous little pause. Then Maud spoke.

"You're joking."

"No—truly. He promised to give me a position on *The Journal*. Reporting, I suppose. I went to all the newspapers this morning."

A flush had mounted to her sister's cheeks.

"Horatia," she said with a tense air of lightness, "where did you get this sudden notion of going to work at all?"

Horatia felt a little sorry. She realized that Maud was being humiliated by the turn the conversation had taken. But still she did want to know about Jim Langley.

"Of course I'll want to do something. No one sits around any more with folded hands waiting to be married."

This was a trifle better. It at least showed the callers that the work project was a freak and not a necessity. Maud decided to try to pass it off as a joke and reckon with Horatia later, but before she could speak one of her guests was inquiring:

"Really on Jim Langley's paper, Miss Grant?"
"Why not?" asked Horatia. "He seems pleasant enough. What is the matter with him?"

"Horatia hasn't been home except summers for four years," said Maud shortly. "Why, he's got a bad reputation, and was mixed up with a dreadful scandal here. He was named in the Hubbell divorce suit."

"And he didn't marry Mrs. Hubbell."
"Should he?" Horatia sought instruction.
Maud rose with an air of exasperation.

"You shouldn't go about alone to newspaper offices, Horatia," she said. "It's ridiculous. As for your working on *The Journal*, you just talk to Harvey and see what he says. Come, let's see the garden."

Horatia saw the garden obediently and the guests' departure, followed close by the bedtime ceremonies at which Maud helped and presided, forced the matter out of the way. It was only as they sat at dinner that the topic rose again. Maud had composed herself and, considering that Horatia's conversation had merely shown inexperience and ignorance, was no longer angry. She was rarely angry for any length of time. Now, looking at her husband over the neat central fern-dish, she said, half-jocularly, "You'll really have to take Horatia in hand, Harvey. She is dreadful. Here she went and saw this Iim

Langley person today and asked him for a position on his paper."

"But the point is, Maud, that he gave me a job."

Harvey looked at his sister-in-law and came at the question from a man angle.

"You don't want to work on his paper, Horatia. If you want that kind of work, try either *The Tribune* or *The Reporter*. Langley's paper is one of those enterprises that run themselves into the ground early. He's always uncertain—no policy, no circulation to amount to anything. And then of course—Langley, himself."

Horatia leaned towards him.

"But tell me about it, Harvey. There was a chorus of horror when I mentioned his name this afternoon. And he was the only gentleman I met this morning. I did try *The Tribune* and *The Reporter*. I even tried *The Buzz-saw*."

Harvey threw back his head and roared.

"That's a modern young woman. Why didn't you take a job on that?"

"They offered me one—a scandal column, but I turned it down. Seriously, tell me about Mr. Langley."

"Why, there's not so much to tell," said Harvey. "He's in pretty bad odor, that's all. The women are all interested in him because he was co-respondent in a divorce suit. Isn't that it, Maud?"

"Don't be silly, Harvey. You know what he is and you ought to tell Horatia."

Harvey tried again with that disinclination to hurt the personal reputation of a man which most men show in such discussion.

"Jack Hubbell sued his wife for divorce and named Langley, who'd been philandering a lot. Langley always did that. He was a University man about my time and a tremendous fellow. Everybody worshipped his footsteps."

"I've heard of him there," said Horatia.

"He had a little money and started this newspaper, which would have been all right if he hadn't refused to tie himself up with any political party and hadn't also refused to make any concessions to advertisers. Seemed to have an idea that newspapers are run like books. Then he got a lot of booze-fighters working for him and sort of lost his grip. That's all there's to it. When his money gives out his paper will go to the wall."

"But the divorce suit?"

"You're as bad as the rest of them," sighed poor Harvey. "Stick to the scandal. It never came to trial at all. Hubbell killed himself after the suit was filed."

Maud finished.

"And he didn't marry the woman or make any attempt to justify the situation. Just stopped going places and refused to explain anything. Naturally people assume the worst."

Horatia felt a little pale. She could hear his kind voice, with the tinge of bitterness in it. And his remark, "Probably you won't want to work

for me after you hear what people say." Well, she had heard. And she did want to work for him. They'd outlawed him from their silly society because he'd held his tongue. Probably none of it was true. And if it was true it didn't matter. She brought her last reflection into words.

"But after all it doesn't much matter, does it? He doesn't want me to marry him or to take stock in his newspaper. All he offers is a job and even if all these things are as dreadful as they are reported to be, they don't enter in. I'm old enough to be incorruptible surely. And I need newspaper experience."

"I think, maybe I could get you on *The Tribune* if I talked to Weissner," said Harvey.

"There," said Maud, "why didn't you come to us first? Of course it's the thing just now to work, since the war. Dorothy Macdonald is studying stenography and you know how rich she is. And lots of others. But you might have asked us or Uncle George."

"I wanted to find work for myself," said Horatia, the memory of that morning's somewhat torn glory still shining in her eyes. "And I've promised Mr. Langley, Maud. I couldn't work on another paper. It would be too insulting."

"You don't want to ruin your reputation and the reputation of all the rest of us, do you?" asked Maud sharply.

"Oh, it's not as bad as all that, you know, Maud," interposed her husband. "Langley pays

his bills and is in good standing at his clubs. Of course he isn't getting anywhere, but it wouldn't hurt Horatia's reputation. Nothing hurts a girl's reputation any more," added Harvey, chuckling. "Debutantes appear in banks and come delivering laundry. You never know when you'll come on them next. Let her do as she likes."

"You're a darling, Harvey. And I promise you, Maud, that I'll tell you all the scandal from the inside and you can flourish it, copyrighted, around the boulevard."

At which sally they all laughed; but the last thing Horatia heard that night as she climbed into Maud's guest-room bed was Maud's voice from her dressing-room, somewhat muffled but distinct, as she talked to her husband.

"I don't like it, Harvey. He's probably fascinated her, and they say he hasn't any principles."

"Oh, come dear, let it wear itself out. Horatia's not a child and she can look out for herself. Come here, sweetheart, and take a look at these white flannels. Are they fit for tennis?"

CHAPTER III

Like Harvey, Horatia had no doubts as to her ability to look out for herself. To a certain extent she had been already doing it and she had begun doing it early so that it was natural for her to be independent and vigorous. Her father had died when she was five and after that her mother had not seemed to care enough about living to keep it up. She had been a pretty, intense woman who had taken her wifehood and maternity very seriously, so seriously that she had quickly faded and at the time of her death had not looked at all like the lovely young girl in leg-o'-mutton sleeves, who smiled out of the photograph in the West Park parlor.

She had two children, both girls to her secret relief and her husband's secret disappointment, and she fussed over their clothes and their childish illnesses interminably. In spite of or perhaps because of her fussing, they were, when she left them, two sturdy little girls with pleasant tempers and good digestions. They accepted the change in their fortunes quietly, taking all the kissing and patting and uncomprehended signs of sympathy which came their way, and, climbing into the big walnut bed at the Grant house

on the first night of their transference there, they cuddled closely together and fell asleep.

George Grant, their uncle, came in to see if they were asleep a little later and stood looking down at them in a kind of puzzled wonder and with a rusty throb of pity at the fact that they looked very small indeed in the big bed. It was as near to a definite emotion towards them as he ever got. He was their father's brother and had officially "taken them" because it was the natural and proper thing to do. He was the head of a dry-goods establishment and by dint of steady application and learning one thing, the wholesale dry-goods business, well, he had made money in a slow accumulating way. And he had built his house, which perfectly expressed him. Like it he was good and substantial and like it also, provincial, unimaginative and unconscious of his limitations and lacks. His wife was enough like him to have been his sister and whether this was the result of slow absorption of his characteristics or had been the original bond between them, no one knew. Mrs. Grant knew as much about clean housekeeping as he knew about dry-goods. She had a subsidiary passion for church work and was an authority on church suppers and foreign missions.

She also had taken her brother-in-law's children because it was the obvious thing for a childless, well-to-do couple to do. But perhaps because the Grants had been married for twelve years without having any children, the desire for

them had either died or never been cultivated and they took Maud and Horatia without warmth. From the very beginning the house on the hill meant repression to them. There was never cruelty or even unkindness but it was all cold. Even in the kitchen there was no freedom or ex-The food was measured and counted pansion. and it was not a place where an enterprising or hungry girl might take a pot of jam or a dozen cookies and abscond with them for an afterschool lunch. To be sure if they were hungry they were allowed to have bread and butter and brown sugar—or a doughnut perhaps. But their aunt or the raw-boned Swedish girl who helped her gave it out always with an air of rationing and several admonitions not to drop the crumbs.

At intervals, all along their path through grammar school, High School and Sabbath school, came the supposedly high spots of recreation, parties which they themselves gave or which they went to as guests. Even at a very early age they had no question as to which kind they enjoyed most. They liked to go to parties and they hated them at home. Parties in other houses usually involved some stiffness at the beginning but they warmed up to gaiety and a joyous kind of disorderliness which sent all the children home flushed, tired and happy. At the Grant house they were functions all the way through. Mrs. George Grant modeled them on the parties she gave to the ladies of the Missionary Guild.

"I hate parties at home," Maud would grumble

to her sister when some morning Mrs. Grant would gravely announce that she thought one was due, and Horatia, always braver, would say, "But Aunt Caroline, what shall we do at the party?" Aunt Caroline, her mind already on the refreshments and the exact dozen of napkins which she would dedicate to the use of the children, had always the same answer, "Why, play games, Horatia—just as you always do."

The children all came. Parties were never events to be ignored, and the young public of West Park was not discriminating if refreshments were involved. They came, all clean and scrubbed, and were sent down to the big bare hall which a freshly-lit fire tried in vain to heat, and they seconded the embarrassed efforts of Maud and Horatia to get up some games. But Mrs. Grant sat by the wall and watched with a mother or two flanking her, and there was no abandon. The refreshments, served in the big dining-room. were all that saved the situation, and even those were spoiled for the two hostesses by a feeling of their aunt's eyes lurking for crumbs. Yet, afterwards, when the children had gone home again and all traces of them were carefully removed, Mrs. Grant would smile and say to her nieces, "Did you have a nice time?" And faithfully, true to a convention which they did not in the least understand, they answered, "Oh, yes, Aunt Caroline."

Of course even all Mrs. Grant's passion for routine could not prevent some crises arising.

One came when Maud refused to do any more studying after she graduated from the High School. In spite of her lamentable monthly report card, Maud had been destined for a teacher and her sudden rebellion at the end of her seventeenth year shocked her aunt terribly. But Maud had a way of being silent and sullen and she had secret reinforcement from Harvey Williams, who was one of the reasons why she did not intend to go to the University. She rather concealed the fact of Harvey at the time of her rebellion, but after she had gained her point, Harvey became a steady caller at the Grant house. Maud had insisted that she was going to earn her own living but she postponed beginning to do it and it shortly became very obvious that she might better spend her few unmarried days preparing a trousseau. Harvey was quite an eligible person, beginning a law practice in the city and living with his mother in West Park. The Grants. once adjusted, smiled in their cheerless way upon the match. Maud's love-making had gone on during Horatia's last year at High School and first year at the University. She was at first tremendously impressed by the fact that Maud's brown curls and pink skin were desirable to the point of matrimony. She recognized the fact that Maud was pretty but rooming with the prettiness and eternally removing jars of cold cream and boxes of pink powder from her side of the bureau had lessened its effectiveness for her. It was, none the less, a great thing to have Maud

being made love to and to think of her in secret as the recipient of passionate kisses and delightful murmured phrases of love. Maud jarred on the romance by being Maud throughout, inclined to giggle and enjoy even Uncle George's crude jokes about Harvey, and Harvey had done his share of the jarring by being a blushful, diffident young man who shot side glances at his fiancée and giggled heavily himself. Horatia did her best to forget them actually and to remember the delightful fact that they were lovers, hoping against hope that they spent their evenings in moonlight walks instead of holding hands at the movies.

By the time Maud was married, her sister was more sophisticated. She had finished her first year at the University and begun to read a great deal. Many subjects, more or less taboo in West Park, she had heard discussed freely by both students and professors. She had decided that there was something wrong with the social and economic systems of the world, that West Park was a small and narrow place, that flirting was silly, that she must devote a great deal of time to reading essays and books on psychology, and that she would like to meet some "real men" and get away from West Park. In spite of all this accumulated philosophy, she was oddly glad to get on a street-car labeled "West Park" when she came home on her first vacation, and to see all the familiar landmarks on the way to the stone house on the hill. She never forgot that homeThat Aunt Caroline was at a missionary meeting and that Mand had a cold in her head and wanted to talk about the initialing of her linen could here. Horatia from romancing somewhat over it.

was a warm June night and the windows were men in the dining-room so that as they sat at immer fivrain could see the city below, its lights use beginning to sparkle through the first dusk, and the sixw freighters on the great lake beyond messing uni repassing with grave dignity. It was all beautiful and quiet and familiar outside and wer no one at the table seemed to feel it except here. The dry was exert, ate silently, his broad, anemoreous time tallen into heavy lines of contentuation. The dry was over, his day's business had been good and after dinner he would water the arms.

As the other emi of the table his wife was talkinch to the sink shout Mand's coming wedding.
ind was focused on the food,
ind was focused on the food,
ind and especially the cleaning
that once more suffered the
chill of the old days when
a children's party. Thank
he the last

Her aung booke into her thought.

And the suppose forucia will be the next

are relicus at the 'U'?"

asked Maud. "Most of the girls come back simply laden with pictures. Esther Dinsmore has a man who motors up to see her every week or so—clear across the state."

"I didn't go in for that sort of thing." There was a trace of self-righteousness mingled with the humor in Horatia's tone. "And I am afraid I won't be the next one, Aunt Caroline, because I don't want to get married for ages. I've lots of things to do first."

"Teaching?" asked Maud in disgust.

"No—I don't think so. Social work, maybe." "Slum work?" It was Aunt Caroline this time.

"We don't call it that any longer." Horatia was patient. "No—— Lots of the social work is scientific work in an office. Collecting statistics."

Aunt Caroline preened herself just a little.

"I may be very old-fashioned but this statistic collecting seems very foolish to me. Just a fad. Now when we send out a missionary to a heathen country we don't ask for statistics. We want to know how many souls he has saved."

"That might in itself be a modest statistic," laughed Horatia.

"And," concluded Aunt Caroline with the air of one who quotes the irrefutable and has a right to quote it, "I'm sure 'the poor ye have always with you.'"

There was a moment's silence. Then Maud giggled.

"Let's stop the deep stuff, for pity's sake. There he comes, Horatia."

Harvey could be seen passing the dining-room windows. Maud giggled again and jumped up to look at herself in the mirror of the sideboard. Then she went through the hall to meet her fiancé.

"Horatia's home," they could hear her saying, "she's an awful highbrow. Not much like poor chicken-brained me." She made her apologies for her lack of mind with enormous pride and Harvey said something in a low voice at which there was another giggle. Horatia felt reluctant to meet him again but she folded her napkin and went out on the porch where the two lovers had settled themselves. Harvey shook hands with her a little awkwardly but not as awkwardly as she had expected. Working in the city had put a keener edge on him. He held his head better and talked better English—not entirely the slangy boy and girl stuff which she had always had from him. On the whole, as she looked him over, Horatia thought her sister was doing rather well. Nothing exceptional in Harvey, of course, but after all he would make a good husband. They talked for a little and Harvey was intelligent on all the subjects which she, a little priggishly, introduced. He was a graduate of her University and full of reminiscence. But for all his pleasant conversation Horatia found herself feeling in the way. Harvey's arm stealing over the back of Maud's chair—Maud's affected, immensely assured little laugh as if she had a world at her feet and need make no effort—it puzzled Horatia. It seemed inconceivable that this well-ordered young man should want her to go so that he could make silly love to a giggling Maud and yet——She stood up and prepared to go into the house. Neither protested.

From that vacation on, Horatia began to be the "intellectual one" in her circle of friends. At first she resented it, then liked it and grew ultimately into complete indifference to what West Park did or didn't think. But that was later. At first she found herself set apart and left out of the jokes. Before she went back to the University Maud was "settled," not in West Park, but in an apartment in the city itself, more accessible for Harvey and better suited to his wife's budding passion for storming the society of the city. With her going Horatia had dropped out of the circle of friends who used to come to the children's parties. The girls had married or gone East or to Normal schools. The boys were marrying or flirting with city girls. Yet, though the reality of her relations with the suburb had all changed, faded, she never lost the feeling that she belonged to it and was in a measure bound to go back to it. She knew that her aunt and uncle wanted her to live with themand that dull as their affection was, they were used to her and wanted her. But stronger than their call was her feeling of West Park's physical beauty, of the vigor of its cool, brisk winds and

of the greatness of the great lakes spread out at the foot of the city and all its suburbs. It was always a relief to come back from the flat little university town.

She had done rather well at the University, though, as she told Maud, she had not "gone in" for the social side of the undergraduate life, the life which was so important to many of the girl students. A great deal of that side of the University bothered her and repelled her. were girls who seemed to care about nothing except prolonged tumultuous flirtations which included an immense amount of kissing and physical demonstration. Horatia allied herself with the group which considered such things a disgrace to the college. It was a strong group, not too large, and they substituted for the flirtations of the other girls an intense interest in and elaborate discussion of the modern woman and her relations to men. They were constantly exchanging cold-blooded little ideas for perfecting the sex. And underneath their scorn for the handholding undoubtedly persisted an interest in the very thing they scorned, judging by the time they put on the subject.

Once in a while they tried to put some of their theories into practice. Horatia would find some young man attracted to her and meet him honestly and simply as she would have met any girl. She would talk in her best manner and tell him about the things she was thinking. And inevitably she drove him away, for the young men were

not at the age when they looked for straight comradeship from girls. There was another code among them. They liked Horatia well enough, rather admired her, but they left her alone. It worried her a little. She did not want to go through life without love. She had heard and read too much about it. And, transcending her talk about the new spirit of friendship between men and women, of a partnership marriage, came flashes of feeling as she read her Keats or stumbled on a boy and a girl saying a clinging goodnight in some dark corner of the campus. She felt left out.

After all it did not matter much, because in the spring of her Sophomore year everything changed. The United States had declared war and all the most interesting young men had melted away, leaving only indistinguishable stars in the University service flag. And it was by the war that Horatia's last two years at the University were colored. She had not had much of a point of view about the European trouble as she vaguely characterized it when it had been purely European. She had talked once of becoming a nurse and going abroad but it was one of her wildest dreams and not an especially cherished one. But now for a year and a half the University had mobilized itself. Appeals for help, lectures from returned soldiers, classrooms and halls filled with flaring war posters, constant campaigns for funds, a sudden hierarchy springing up among Red Cross workers, blue veils, red veils and white veils shrouding the heads of the earnest bandage makers, and constant efforts on the part of every instructor to relate his or her branch of study to the great war, realizing that only by so doing could he hold any number of his pupils—such things did the war mean to the college. The interest in athletics died down like an untended fire—seriousness came into vogueand there was even more to it. All these young students, still mentally adolescent, suffered. They suffered because they had been taught that they should understand life, because the supernatural had been left out of their philosophies and blind faith had been discarded. Yet they were face to face with horrors, with facts, philosophies which they could not comprehend and they strained their minds trying to understand. Those who had been mildly Socialist turned with repugnance from Bolshevism. Those who had always had a smug trust in their financial solidity saw fortunes vanish or become useless in the face of misfortune. Individualists realized that their social duty was unescapable. For two years these students who had gone to college to learn facts, as they supposed, found themselves in a chaos of changing ideas, guided only unsurely by instructors as bewildered as they were themselves. No one wanted to stay in college. They stayed only because of parental pressure and because the University authorities introduced as much practical war work as was possible. And the cold-blooded philosophy and psychology Horatia had been ab-

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sorbing was melted in the heat of the great world emotionality.

Then at the height of all this enthusiasm came the armistice revealing to the world suddenly and fearfully the confusion the world was in—confusion of politics, of sociology, and ethics.

For the first few months after the signing of the armistice the word "reconstruction" flew about the campus. War funds became "reconstruction funds." And then doubt began to creep about. What did reconstruction mean and what would it lead to? Discontents penetrated the campus grounds. The instructors, their own opinions in a state of flux and bound to wait for further developments before crystallizing, were poor leaders, dealing out generalities and ambiguousness. A certain fixed curriculum dragged its way through the months. They were all conscious that they were holding to outworn forms. Who knew what the University of the future would be? Perhaps those diplomas given out in June, 1919, were the least valuable of any ever given. Students went out into a life which the instructors could not forecast. In wartime it was possible to preach courage and sacrifice. In these strange new peace times who knew whether courage and sacrifice were cardinal virtues?

This of course was all under the surface, hardly felt perhaps by many of both teachers and students. But the unrest, the doubts were there, revealed to the least probing. To some of them, among them Horatia, a strange thing

happened. She had been trained at first to believe in a pragmatic philosophy which the war had swept away in its wind of romantic sacrifice and heroism. In her first two years she had felt rather scornful of the silliness of college men. And then they were drawn out of her life into the great struggle and became heroes. Horatia had come to believe in heroism. She had heard of so many young lives offered nobly, read many young loose-hung fighting autobiographies. And she had come out of college as thorough a young romanticist as ever lived in the Middle Ages, but a puzzled young romanticist with neither Church nor king to give her guidance. She brought her strong faith in young men, her growing desire for all the romance life could give, home. Home to West Park and after a taste of the dull routine of Aunt Caroline's days and the gossiping wedding of Edna, had decided that she could not bear the let-down, the drop from romantic idealism and noble ideas into the actuality of a corner There was more in life which she must have and go after posthaste. And so it was that the morning after the wedding, she had set off adventuring and found the road open and pleasant.

CHAPTER IV

ROM The Journal office the lake looked blue and calm, disdaining the stray gusts of wind that tossed newspapers and rubbish about in the alleys below Main Street. Horatia had moved her typewriter over to the window so typewriting might be accompanied by some compensations. Langley said it increased her mistakes one hundred per cent, but Horatia insisted that it doubled her inspirations.

"Which is necessary," she added, "when one is trying to be both brilliant and informational. The two things don't track."

She hated typewriting. Her fingers, untrained to accuracy, stumbled and missed their aim and wrote absurdities. But typewriting was one of the things which must be done if she was to do journalistic work, they told her, and Horatia had decided that working on a newspaper was worth a good many sacrifices. She had gone through some of them already in the shape of family protests and disapprovals and if another one was to take the shape of a 1913 Oliver typewriter, that too was to be borne. Gladly borne for the sake of the thrilling contact with unprinted, raw news, with information on a hundred subjects that had never interested her before, for the sake

of the kaleidoscopic picture of the city's life and means of life, for the caustic brilliant comments of Jim Langley and Bob Brotherton, sitting with their pipes smoking furiously as they uncoiled the truth about some happening, or wrote editorials of things as they ought to be. Out of the terrific tangle of the philosophies and political economies of the world she saw these men draw threads and wind them neatly on a spool of thought. The tangle remained a tangle but a fascinating instead of a discouraging one. was more what was said than what was written, though enough out of tune with the current hysteric dread of American Bolshevism was published to account for Harvey's characterization that Langley had "no policy" which meant the fatal lack of the right one. Horatia knew now why Jim Langley's paper had never appeared in the Grant household. She had seen the president of the Dry-Goods Association of which Uncle George was a pillar denounced in its pages for crooked political dealing. She knew why the advertisements that The Journal ran were those of obscure stores or coöperative establishments or small firms employing union labor. months she had learned more about politics, psychology, philosophy and labor problems than she had known there was to learn. Most of it had come direct from Langley. He had looked a little surprised when she had turned up that Monday morning, whimsically surprised.

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"So you came?" he said simply with a thousand implications in his tone.

And she had answered, "I came," giving therewith the answer to all his implied questionings in her tone. He gave her a desk and told her briefly, almost abruptly, what he thought she could do. She could "cover" certain meetings for them, mostly big lectures and concerts that must be reported, with such theater notices as would be necessary and for the rest, it would be mostly writing up the notes of Bob Brotherton, or Charley Jones, the other reporter, when their work crowded them too much.

"You see," he explained, "you take no one's place but you can relieve the pressure on all of us."

That was the outline of her work but compressed in the outline she found ten and sometimes twelve hours a day of fascination. The two other men had taken her advent rather smilingly but they soon found her useful. She learned to read their handwriting, to decipher their notes, to write a story from their verbal outline. And "in spite of her typewriting," said Langley, "it is good copy."

Little by little she had come into the confidences of the office. The men talked freely in front of her, tried to show her how to typewrite, explained their standards, told of their own histories and ambitions. Bob Brotherton had meant to write and was particularly expansive about his wasted ambition when he had been drinking a

little. Horatia came to recognize the effect of liquor in his conversation and to discount it. She liked him too because Langlev had told her something of Bob's miseries, his domestic tragedy of an insane wife and a feeble-minded child, both now in institutions somewhere. And it was impossible to keep from liking Charley Jones, out of college three years and hoping, praying and urging that Labor would come into its own soon. All the problems of the city and of the country, even of the world, were met in the little office by Bob's literary pessimism, Charley's cure-all and the philosophical endurance of Langley. Langley never got angry or excited. When the others were tangled as to policy or inner meanings, he hit the truth on the head with some single sentence. Horatia, sitting at her typewriter or at her table with her back to them all, would catch herself listening for his comment and when it came would seize upon it as truth and final.

She had no idea of how much she had changed the office, of how much more work and less idling had come with her. Perhaps because her dogged determined industry made them ashamed, perhaps because her uplifted profile at the window or her apologetic frowning smile at some mistake she had made charmed them, they all worked with a new energy. And they were all amazed at her lack of self-consciousness. They were experienced, each in his own way, and they watched her for those traces of self-consciousness which break down the barriers between business and

personal relations. But there was none of it. She never blushed, she never seemed afraid. It was all interest—pure interest.

"I can't get it," said Bob one day after she had left the office. "She likes it here. What does she see in this decrepit sheet to interest her? She ought to be listening to troubadours under her window, instead of pounding a typewriter."

"Precisely," said Langley, a little over-dryly. "She ought, but she wouldn't. She's gone on a hunt for her own romance—that's what the modern young girl does instead of having it brought to her."

"And she's found it here?" grinned Bob.

Langley shrugged his shoulders and tilted his pipe.

"Temporarily. The view helps."

He sent Bob out on an assignment shortly after and then stood before the window watching the darkness close down on the water.

There was no doubt that *The Journal's* affairs were looking up. A new movement had come into the city—a non-partisan political element who in default of a paper of their own were using his. They were backing a strong man and a comparatively decent one for mayor in the November elections and political advertising had swelled the funds of *The Journal* as much as its advocacy of a strong candidate had increased its circulation. And Langley found his old nerve coming back into his writing. He admitted occasionally to some of his companions that it was

worth while writing if someone was reading what he wrote. But there seemed to be other things that stimulated his thought. He had a way of watching Horatia's profile, clear and pure against the window, of drinking in the frank admiration in her tone and her face as she talked to him, the sweetness of her impersonality—those things were getting into his writing too. But he never admitted that. So on this October day when Horatia sat struggling with her typewriter, he acted quite as if he was oblivious to her presence.

She rose at last and brought her copy to him and he groaned as usual at the misplaced letters and figures.

"But read it," said Horatia gaily. "It's a description of the mass meeting the women got up for our candidate which mentions the name of every lady present who can afford to subscribe to the paper. I'm getting on to the game. And please don't give me any more to do this afternoon because I want to go."

"Nice businesslike attitude," said the editor.

"Everything's done," said Horatia, defensively.

"All right."

"I'll tell you what I want to do," volunteered Horatia.

Langley had permitted himself no inquisitiveness but he seemed glad and composed himself to listen.

"My revered uncle and aunt feel so nieceless

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since I work all day and sleep all the time that I'm home that they have decided to do a very wonderful thing. They are going to Florida for the rest of the winter to look at beauties which they are getting too old to appreciate. And as it seemed useless to keep the stone house open for me, I am told to go to live with Maud. I don't want to live with Maud, however, and, truth to tell, I don't think Maud, though she won't admit it, wants me to very much. I'm not much help to her and I rile her pool of life. She has admitted that if I could get a 'cunning little apartment and some girl to live with me,' I might be more content. And so I have found a cunning little apartment and the friend dropped from heaven to live with me. She is the new woman in the government labor office, Grace Walsh. heard about her—she was five or six years ahead of me at the University—and I went to see her and she's very keen about it, living with me. I mean."

"Where is the cunning place?"

"On Sixth Street. New apartment building. I'm going to meet Grace there now and when we get the pictures hung, you can drop your editorial mantle and come to call."

Langley flushed a little. It was a long time since he had had such light-hearted invitations flung at him—or so it must have seemed to him. And, vaguely understanding the flush, Horatia was suddenly enraged at the ostracism which had been forced upon him.

"Won't you walk over and see the place now with me?" she said, impulsively. "It isn't half a mile."

She expected him to refuse her. He had not repeated his invitation to lunch since she had been in the office and, courteous as he always was, Horatia fancied that he avoided personal contact with her when he could. But now, to her surprise, he rose.

"I'd like to. I've been wanting a walk all day."

They swung along briskly and this time the sardonic Langley seemed left behind in the office. The new one laughed like a boy and walked as if all the rigidity had melted out of his body. On the street, as they passed people whom he or Horatia knew, his hat was off almost with a flourish as if he greeted the world afresh.

"You act as if you'd dropped all the cares of

the world," laughed Horatia.

"No-I'm still carrying them. But it isn't the cares of the world that weigh you down. It's your own little cares. If you have none of those and no ugly scars left by them you can carry the troubles of the world easily enough. What an easy problem to solve Bolshevism is, if you aren't trying to solve it with a mind diseased by personal aches and worries."

Horatia did not answer. She hoped he would go on into fuller, more specific confidence. hated herself for the question that so often cropped up in her mind as to what were the real facts of the Hubbell trouble. She understood

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so much of him now that she wanted to know about that. It would be the last link in the chain—no, the last step in the ladder that mounted—whither she did not know. Somewhere in her vaguest thoughts she and Jim Langley understood each other perfectly, scoffed at the rest of the world that did not understand.

But he did not go on. They reached the apartment building, and Horatia, pulling out her latchkey long before it was necessary, rang for the elevator.

"Your friend is there?" asked Langley, suddenly, sharply.

This time it was Horatia's turn to flush. She dropped from the clouds.

"Of course," she said, impatiently. "But I like to use my latch-key."

She rapped on the door where a card already announced the names of Miss Walsh and Miss Grant. There was no answer and she unlocked the door and pushed it open. A note lay on the little table in the hall. Horatia picked it up and read it. Then she turned to Langley with her head a little higher than usual.

"Grace had to go downtown for some things. She'll be back later. You can come in anyway, can't you, and let me show you the place?"

His eyes met hers squarely.

"It's better not," he said, quietly.

They stood confronting the silly, awkward little situation with varying emotions. His rage at the fact that he couldn't be natural for fear of compromising her—that he had to protect her not from himself but from his reputation, was natural enough. And Horatia raged because she did not know that she dared urge him, and she wanted to.

"It's absurd," she cried impatiently. "It's stupid. It's beastly. You've been abominably treated. Do you think I care what people say?"

His eyes seemed to melt at the championing kindness of her tone—then froze again.

"The oppressed always appeal to the romantic. But you want to make sure of the merits of the oppressed. Some other time, Miss Grant. I enjoyed my walk."

He was gone immediately and Horatia flung furniture and rugs into place until her anger was cooled. Grace came in half an hour later to find things in amazing order.

"You've done everything."

"I wanted to work," answered Horatia, briefly.

"Look here, do I have to have a chaperon every time I want a man to come up here? Do you?"

Grace pulled off her gloves, sat down on the sofa and surveyed the room and the question calmly. She was a calm person, who balanced an unshocked acceptance of any laxity or scandal in the world of literature against an equally uncomplaining acceptance of the restraints of the world of action. And she seemed fond of

Horatia, though Horatia had a feeling of getting acquainted only up to a certain point.

"I suppose not," Grace said slowly. "People may be a little vicious in their talk if you're not somewhat circumspect. I wouldn't advise sessions with married men—or ones with highly colored reputations—"

"What does it matter what people say?" urged Horatia.

"Oh, it doesn't—and it does. I think it would to you. But the question of having men here alone isn't likely to arise. For the kind of men you'd want wouldn't come if they thought your reputation would be endangered. There are a few survivals of romance, and the knightly spirit, and one of the last to go, if it ever goes, will be the care that men take of women's names. It's my experience that names rank more highly than bodies in male psychology."

There was no sign of any remembrance of the episode in Langley's manner the next day and Horatia found no difference in his attitude towards her. She never saw him outside the office. The curtains were hung in the little apartment. Grace sat up an informal tea-table at which Horatia assisted. Even Maud came occasionally with some of her friends to savor this bachelor life, and they pretended to envy for half an hour. It was a very pleasant apartment and Horatia found that being an intellectual in the city was far different from being an intellectual in the confines of West Park or a highbrow at the Uni-

versity. Not all men were afraid of brains. Charley Jones came and brought young men with him, several friends of Harvey's came and there were others justifying themselves by this claim or that to a seat near that tea-table where Grace Walsh, looking like a Dutch picture, poured out tea and calm cynical judgments and Horatia, in a yellow silk dress on Sundays and blue serge on weekdays, pressed lemon, cream, tea cakes and joy of living on them.

It was wonderful to see how the excitement of the new life brought a richer color into Horatia's cheeks and a glow into her eyes which made every gown the most becoming one. It was amazing to see how her power over men grew. She seemed to toss a mental challenge to every man she met, a challenge not to a combat of words or phrases but to a struggle over the interesting and vital things in the world. She was enjoying herself so much that she tempted them all to discover her secret of enjoyment.

But she allowed nothing to interfere with her work and more and more of her time was spent at the office as the fall days grew shorter and the lake more steadily grey and the work heavier. The November election promised to be a most important one in the history of the city. The Journal's candidate, Nels Johnson, came and went in the office. He was a heavy little man with a kind shrewd face and a tolerant smile. Horatia liked him and she liked to hear him talk and give opinions for publication. Langley liked

him too, she knew. She could hear them often through the door of his office discussing things which had nothing to do with the election.

"The Reds are rotten, physically and morally, and they run on a single track mentally, most of them," Langley would say, "but I'll be damned if they aren't much more attractive than the slinking crowd that want to put out all the pipes in the country. I'd sooner have an old-style Tammany man than one of these ministerial sneaks."

And Bob Brotherton, his nose a little red still and his utterance a trifle thick from indulgence in some private store of liquor to which he seemed to have eternal access, would agree. And the candidate for office would agree. And Charley Jones, with some comment on the attempt of the churches to dominate labor, would agree. And Horatia, vigorously nodding at her typewriter, would agree too that she wanted the world run by freedom and not by imprisonments.

But perhaps the nicest moments and hours for Horatia were the evenings in the office when they all worked late and tobacco and accomplishment were thick in the air. Sometimes the reporters would all be out on some errands and Langley would talk to her—always impersonally, never emotionally, but expansively, going back into the history of the city to explain some political anomaly to her and telling her, in spite of himself, about his ideas and plans. She came to respect him more and more and to believe in the

fineness of his instincts. But still she never heard him say a word of his personal affairs. She wondered how and where he lived. Somewhere on the other side of the city, she knew, and that was all. He never told her about the old scandal and she never could find out more about it. At a certain point in his career Langley had simply shut his mouth and there was no one else who knew more than Harvey Williams.

Horatia gloried in the growing prestige of *The Journal*. Even Harvey bought it now and Maud's early opposition had changed into a feeling that Horatia with all her eccentricity was bringing distinction upon them. She never said that to Horatia. But she talked of her "intellectual sister" without embarrassment now on the Boulevard.

CHAPTER V

AUD had her own plans for Horatia. She herself was finding 116 herself was finding life very pleasantly successful and she followed her leaders carefully, trusting no habits of life which they did not trust and indeed regarding all other types of living as either impossible to attain or impossible to endure. She was developing the best possible setting for herself and her family. Her house broke none of the rules laid down in "House and Garden," with its striped cretonnes and plain linens and comfortable furniture. It was not too ostentatious because the young people around her were not ostentatious, but it was a beginning. And she saw her future before her with delightful clearness through a succession of increasingly expensive automobiles, through a succession of increasingly elaborate gowns up to the day when she would own a great brick house in the city and a winter home in California. She did not take great credit to herself for this ambition. It was due to her own astuteness and Harvey's cleverness.

So she gave dinner parties to people whom she knew and liked and other dinner parties to people who were useful to her husband, and enjoyed her progress along the reasonable way of

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luxury and importance. The things Horatia talked about, odd things picked up in her newspaper office, of a new spirit in the world, of the relentless advance of the hordes of workers. bothered her not at all. She knew that servants were increasingly hard to get and to keep "in their place" and that there were "labor troubles" in some of the manufactories managed by people whom she knew and that "everybody was striking." But she knew too that Harvey placed the responsibility on the war for much of the trouble. and she had no doubt that, the war being over. those little matters would adjust and allow the right people to run things as they should be run. Horatia talked a great deal but Maud had no doubts about her sister's ultimate destiny. Somewhere along the line, and not too far along, she meant to marry Horatia to some desirable man. She had discovered that Horatia was an asset at a dinner party just as she was a blight at a bridge. She was one person when she was making inexcusable and enraging blunders at a bridge-table and another when she appeared at a tea, able and willing to talk of the newest local interest or problem to important and seriousminded ladies or when, in some queer effective dinner-dress, she sat with her bright, grave face turned in constant interest to the man beside her.

"Horatia plays up to men awfully well," Maud told her husband. And was wholly wrong. Horatia was too interested to play up to anyone, man or woman. She had come from her Uni-

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versity into a world vastly more stimulating than she had imagined. It was, as Langley had told her, a world tired and worn by war, a world in vast upheaval over the division of material things, but through the weariness and worn places relentless new life, undiscouraged energies were already pushing their way. Since the war young people had come to feel their power and their indispensability; young plans for life and ways of life, less greedy than the old ones, pushed themselves forward, sure that they could not fail as deplorably as the old systems had done. Women were no longer tremulous about their possibilities; an under-supply of men had forced them out of their dependencies and they faced life more sturdily. Men, shocked into the realization that death comes devastatingly to whole generations of the young, faced life more sturdily too, though temporarily with less responsibility, with more desire for immediate pleasures, for immediate achievements, and with an undertone of mental insecurity. The whole world seemed to feel unstable and ready for experiments, any experiments. That was the world which Horatia had found and it mated badly with Maud's. Maud's world, Maud's friends, lived by the rules laid down by old-fashioned success and decency. They held to the old order but not to the spirit of the old order. The spirit of the old order had been far-reaching, far-seeking, anxious to perpetuate its own ideas and to raise generation after generation like itself. But Maud and Harvey had no thought of grandchildren or of the future of their own ideas. Their ideas reached not much farther than the brick mansion and the house in California.

Through their circles and through her own Horatia came and went and everywhere she touched life and tingled with the contact, unconscious that it was she herself who was electric. Langley watched her as she dashed in and out of his office and tried not to do so and on his failure cursed himself under his breath for a doddering fool and worked harder than ever.

He sent Horatia home at five o'clock on the afternoon of the election, for they had put out a special edition the day before and he noticed the unnatural flush of her cheeks.

"Come back tonight if you like," he said. "You can answer the telephones after the returns begin to come in. But there'll be nothing before ten."

Horatia went obediently. At the apartment she found an urgent message from Maud. Someone had failed her and would Horatia come to dinner? Horatia called her to beg off and yielded. Maud was very serious about her dinner parties and this one, it appeared, was especially important.

"You can go at ten, if you have to. But don't leave me with an unbalanced table. There'd be two men sitting next each other. Please."

Horatia promised and hung up the receiver, smiling a little at the enormity of two men sitting

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next each other. But after all it gave her something to do and she was not sorry.

Harvey greeted her admiringly in the livingroom.

"How are politics?"

"I'd give a lot to know."

"Well," he admitted, "your candidate really does stand a show. It's amazing the way he has come on, without more backing. The chances are that he'll run second or third."

"I think he'll be first," said Horatia, and was going on when Maud came in, resplendent in black satin and with her blond hair drawn back from her forehead in perfect waves. She looked Horatia over critically. Horatia's dress was the color of burnt orange and obviously she had done her hair herself and quickly. But even Maud could not cavil.

"I've given you young Wentwoth," she said, with the air of one who confers great benefits, "and don't talk his arm off about politics. He's rather sporty—was an aviator—is awfully rich, they're the grain exporters, you know. And do be nice to him, won't you?"

"It's easier to be nice to the poor than the sporty rich. But I'll try."

She found it surprisingly easy to be nice after all. Anthony Wentworth had the charm of a young man and the finesse of an older one. He talked on all sorts of subjects—about soldiers and soldiering, not from the point of view Horatia heard most often in *The Journal* office,

the economic standpoint, but from the romantic one. And Horatia, who had given up the hope that there was anything romantic in war, listened to him as he talked of chances and perils and adventures, never for a minute in self-exploitation but for sheer joy in having found a listener who knew what he was trying to say.

"But you got out of it," she protested. "Why

didn't you keep on flying?"

He smiled a little apologetically.

"I don't enjoy flying for mere sport—or commercially. There's no pleasure in it as there can be in driving a car or riding a horse. But to run the risks and take the chances and know there's a reason why you should is different."

He relapsed into an attack on his salad and Horatia broke up a cracker and thought of the difference between his ideas of war and the war as it was seen by ex-soldiers who drifted into The Journal office with gossip and complaints. But she did not pursue the idea, for when the salad was finished Anthony Wentworth had more to say to her, so much that she forgot about the election and thought of how wonderful it would be to travel through all the queer countries of the world with a man who could ride and shoot and drive an airplane and whose hair grew back from his forehead naturally. Maud, from the head of the table, looked at them and even found time to dream a very hasty dream in which she figured largely as the sister-in-law of Mr. Anthony Wentworth.

But in the living-room Horatia remembered and to her horror it was half-past ten. Signalling to Maud, she started to leave the room and was annoyed to find Wentworth following her.

"It's very early, Miss Grant."

"I know, but I am just going to work. I work in *The Journal* office and it's election night and I meant to get back by ten o'clock. Now it will be eleven."

He did not show the slightest perturbation at the announcement of her work, but pulled out his watch.

"Not if you let me take you down in my car. Can't I, please?"

"I'd love it."

They seemed to fly along the streets and she loved the sureness of his driving. Huddled beside him in her cloak, with the wind in her face, that too was an adventure. The city streets were more crowded than usual and knots of men stood together on the corner, arguing and discussing. At The Journal office. Horatia noted with satisfaction that there was a crowd around the hall. a large enough crowd to prove the importance of The Journal politically, she thought. Anthony Wentworth pushed through it up to the door of the office and Wentworth followed her in. The tobacco smoke was thick in the room. was crowded and unfamiliar, with a man sitting at her desk with his feet on her table and Langley laughing rather uproariously at something. As she came in the conversation halted abruptly. Some of the men knew her but to most of them the slim beautiful girl in evening clothes and the tall, immaculate man beside her seemed a curious apparation. There was an awkward moment. Horatia seemed chiefly conscious of Jim Langley's eyes suddenly eager, suddenly hostile, suddenly cynical again. It was her companion who broke the silence as he greeted Langley cordially.

"Why, I didn't know what I was getting into, Langley," he said. "Is it your paper Miss Grant works on? I brought her down because she was

in such a hurry to get here-"

To Horatia her hurry now seemed absurd. What had she hurried for? They didn't need her. She was simply out of place.

"You told me I could answer the telephones."

She tried to make a joke of it but Langley did not help her.

"Miss Grant is over-conscientious," he said, half to Wentworth, and then wholly to her, "I am sorry you hurried away from your party."

"It wasn't a party," said Horatia. "I was at my sister's house for dinner. And please put me to work at something. I know I look silly but I'll keep my coat on."

Her self-consciousness had gone and the situation was easy and real again. But the two men who were talking to her looked at each other for the space of a second measuringly. Then with a few casual inquiries as to the progress of the election Wentworth went out.

"You can take the 'phone in my room," said

Langley. "Tell people who call that returns are only beginning to come in but that Johnson runs second on a count of nine precincts. Emphasize Johnson. I'll get the news on the other wire and pass it on to you."

She nodded understandingly and holding her cloak over her shoulders passed through the crowded room with her perfectly friendly disarming smile. It was significant that no one said anything about her or even exchanged a glance or smile after she had passed. Langley, looking on the alert to check any such demonstration, seemed satisfied.

The smoke thickened and the telephone was incessant. Horatia answered innumerable inquiries—of men who gave their names as if it gave them a first right to information—of women who seemed to try to make their anxious voices anonymous. It was amazing how many people cared. And didn't care! She remembered the nonchalance of the people at Maud's dinner party—the perfect courtesy of the young exaviator towards the triviality of the local election. What did he know or care about the future of The Journal or Jim Langley? What did she know-why did she care? She mechanically kept on, answering questions—listening to the voices of the men in the other room, now excited, now indifferent, now voicing an analysis of this or that chance. The smoke was even thicker. It hung like a cloud over the desks and tables—it created an atmosphere of masculinity. Women can not smoke in such a way. It seemed as if the smoke were a cloud of hopes and chances and ideals in which these men were floating.

Things went well—then badly. Horatia's philosophy melted away. Nothing mattered except success, Johnson's success. She felt a strange exhilaration at the fact that they didn't know—couldn't know yet—and that there might be whole precincts which would go exclusively for Johnson. The men at the tables labelling the 39th as Catholic—"nothing there"—"maybe 40 in the 27th," irritated her. Why did they frighten themselves with all these calculations?

She looked up at Langley, who had come in with a report.

"He's got to win—he's gone so far. Things couldn't be so contrary as to let him lose now."

Suddenly he smiled at her.

"Incurable romanticist," he said, and went out again.

At twelve o'clock things were in utter confusion—at one o'clock it was clear as daylight. If Johnson had not won he had so nearly done so that only a trick of luck would defeat him. His chances were good.

At half past one he looked secure and the office was slowly emptying. The telephone calls had nearly ceased. The last of the politicians departed, hoping to get a bit of stray news at the city hall and promising to telephone it as soon as possible. Horatia still sat at Langley's desk—her head on her hand—her cloak thrown back

—dreaming of what this might mean and mixing her dreams with a hundred irrelevancies.

"Well," said Langley, "we've won, I think." His voice was very quiet and yet there was a new sureness in it.

Horatia got up a little wearily, dragging her cloak.

"I have never been so glad of anything," she answered.

He came behind her to lift the wrap and put it about her shoulders.

"I must take you home."

It was very quiet. All the excitement seemed to have given way to stupor. In the hazy office they spoke slowly and Horatia felt vaguely unreal.

"Aren't you glad?" she pressed for an answer.

"Very." He spoke tenderly, as if to reassure a child, folding the wrap lingeringly over her shoulders.

"And you'll be happier now?"

"Happier-romanticist-what's happiness?"

"It's everything," said Horatia.

She looked up at him and the dark circles under her eyes and the pallor of her cheeks made her suddenly pathetic. A tremendous tenderness woke in Langley's face. Tenderness and pain. The cynicism which had guarded his emotions seemed to slip away.

"I'm happy just to be near you-near you."

He drew her gently back against him and bent towards her lips. They met his—so sweetly, so

softly, with the innocence of their touch matching the wonder in her eyes. Wonder that love had dawned on her life.

He did not speak—only held her. It was she who broke the silence.

"All the wonderful things in the world are coming true."

But at that he released her, lifting her face in his hands.

"You've brought me back to life. You've made me come back when I was afraid to come—and when I hated to come. You've made me want to try all over. And there's not a thing in the world I can do for you—nothing to offer you—nothing."

She felt suddenly grown-up and maternal.

"Isn't it enough to—love me?" she asked, hesitating a little.

"My love!" He scorned it.

"It's a strong, beautiful love."

He turned away drearily.

"You romance—you can't help romancing. No, it's not beautiful; it's strong, God knows, but not beautiful. Don't you see, Horatia—don't you see I'm a spent sort of person. I can't take your youth and loveliness. I haven't a right. You belong to someone young and fine like yourself."

"I belong where I love." Horatia was impatient of argument. She was a woman in love and a hundred instincts pulled at her heart.

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Langley paled at the words. Then again he held her close to him—despairingly close.

"Anything in the world I have," he breathed.

"And now I must take you home."

They went out into the quiet street and went along swiftly, Horatia too happy for silence or leisurely walking.

"There are more stars and the wind is a wind

of joy," she exulted.

Langley said nothing but at her door he kissed her again—gently and sweetly.

"Good-night, my love, good-night. You must sleep well. And I'll never, never hurt you or let you hurt yourself."

"Can't you stop worrying?" begged Horatia.

"Can't you just love? I don't even think."

"I'll try."

When she looked at her face in her mirror the exaltation of it startled her.

"Love makes you beautiful," she thought and slipped into her bed to lie ecstatically still, thinking of nothing except the touch of lean brown hands and the smell and touch of his rough coat. And her mind sang hymns to the wonder of love.



She was for telling everyone at once but Langley demurred. Going to the office next morning she lingered to enjoy her own anticipations. It was different now. All restraints were over between them, she thought.

He was not there. That was the first disap-

pointment. Later, when he came in, there were other men with him and his greeting was as formal as it had been the day before. She bent over her work, went out on assignments with her mind repeating and repeating every quiver of incident of the night before. At five o'clock she was alone again and he came in. But instead of going to the inner office he came to her desk and as she looked up she saw that his face was suffering, greatly stirred.

"Horatia," he asked, "did you mean it—do you

mean it now-in daylight?"

She lifted her arms towards him and was swept off her feet.

"My God," she heard him say, "I was so sure you couldn't have meant it. I can't fight any longer."

"Do you know that every footstep of yours about this office has sounded in my heart?"

"My arms are so weary with waiting."

"I never hoped—but once in a while I dreamed, although I had no right—no right at all."

He was a wonderful lover, so wonderful that he silenced her own enthusiasms.

But again he grew fearful.

"You don't see me as I am, Horatia. Now close your eyes. I can't have you looking at me, I might exaggerate. Listen. I am thirty-five. I have no great enthusiasms—except you. I have no money to speak of, no home—my faith in my feeble talents is shaken—my faith in the

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world isn't settled. I'm not even strong physically. There's nothing, Horatia."

"There's you."

"There's me, transfused and illuminated by your feeling for me, by your wonderful romance, by the brightness of your own spirit. But if you withdraw it——"

"Silly—it isn't true, and if it were I shan't withdraw it ever. Because it's love and can't be withdrawn."

"Love is perishable."

"Not my love." The splendid perennial dogmatism spoke again.

He was serious. Then, "I want a promise from you, Horatia. If the time comes when you don't see it with all this enthusiasm you'll tell me—won't you—freely, knowing that already you've given me more than I deserve—and that I won't be hurt or angry—will you?"

At his insistence she promised.

"When can we be married?"

"Not too soon, Horatia—not till you know me, not as an editor but as a man, a man who makes mistakes and is stupid."

"I don't care about that silly scandal."

"Oh, I didn't mean the scandal. I meant until you know more of the little things about me—that I have a nasty, early-morning temper—that I can be trivial over the kind of dinner I get."

She put her hand over his mouth.

"Such things matter," answered Langley sagely. "Well—you've promised anyway."

CHAPTER VI

THE next day was Sunday. Horatia told Maud her news after dinner as they sat on Maud's comfortable veranda. She was neither surprised nor disappointed at Maud's reception of the news. There was just about as big a storm as she had expected. Maud, having laid the worrying ghost of Langley, was enraged at its reappearance.

"And Anthony Wentworth was so taken with you the other night," she wailed. "Don't you want to get anywhere? You ever fool-

Horatia had quite forgotten about Anthony. For a moment she did wonder vaguely what he would think. But she was too absorbed in herself to wonder about such trivialities. whole being was full of an exaltation which seemed to run stirringly through every vein. Her ignorance of emotion made everything more amazing. There did not seem much resemblance in what she was feeling to anything she had ever read or talked about. Her love was so warm, so alive, so much hers-

"I really think you could have had Anthony Wentworth." Maud harped desperately on her own disappointment.

"I wish you wouldn't talk that way about a man I've met only once. It's indecent, Maud. It's disgusting."

"It's indecent to engage yourself to a man who is twice as old as you are—who's been the talk of the city! At your age! It will ruin you! It's impossible! Talk to Harvey and you'll see."

Horatia permitted herself a smile.

"I knew when you went down there that something dreadful would happen," Maud went on. "I should think you'd see the fatality of mixing up with a man like that."

"Please, Maud, stop; there's no sense in being

so violent. It's my affair after all."

"It's a family affair. I didn't marry a man who'd disgrace us all."

Horatia turned from coaxing tolerance into sudden hauteur.

"Nor shall I."

Maud was politic enough to abandon a hopeless cause. She laid a hand on her sister's unresponding shoulder.

"You get me all worked up. I don't blame you really. You're so young and inexperienced. And he is fascinating. So people say. But he hasn't a thing to offer you."

"Marriage to me isn't a question of offerings."

Maud looked skeptical.

"Marriage, my dear," she said, 'isn't a matter of love in the moonlight purely. And the question of bread and butter is pretty important."

"I can earn my bread and butter."

"Not after you're married."

"Just as I'm doing now. I wouldn't think of not working. That's been the whole trouble with marriage," went on Horatia, recalling some of her early college theories. "It's been an exploitation on both sides. It ought to be a partnership."

She wasted her breath. Maud, convinced that Horatia was merely talking, returned to the main issue.

"I'm sure you'll see, dear, if you'll be reasonable, how utterly impossible this is. He's not young and——"

"For heaven's sake, Maud, why attack all sides at once? Isn't it bad enough to destroy his character without also attacking him on the score of age?"

"You haven't made any plans for marriage,

have you?"

"When we marry we'll do it without planning. I'll not hang around waiting for guest towels."

Maud cheered at this lack of definiteness.

"Well," she said, "there's no use in being hasty. Take your time and think it over. But remember that marriage is a very serious thing."

"And very expensive," Horatia added satiri-

cally.

"Bring him up to call. I'd like to meet him and talk to him."

"He never makes calls."

"He used to."

Horatia flushed a little again.

"Did he tell you about Mrs. Hubbell?" asked Maud with some eagerness.

"If you are going to be spiteful, Maud, I shall not come here any more at all. I am not bothering about—Jim's—past personal affairs nor the fact that a lot of old gossips have nothing better to do than to pry into them."

"Well, I'd never marry a man without finding out a little something about his past. And such a past! It's all very well to be high and mighty, Horatia, but when a man has been a co-respondent!"

But Horatia had put on her hat and gone down the steps. Maud ceased with a gesture and looked after her sister thoughtfully.

Horatia went home to her apartment and threw herself down to fume in rage. Grace Walsh laughed. Horatia, in ardent need of a confidante, had told her about Jim that morning and Grace guessed where Horatia had been.

"What did you expect? What you want to do is to make Langley a social asset. Don't growl so. I mean what I say. There's no reason why he shouldn't be. Turn the tables on Mrs. Williams."

Grace's own attitude had not brought much satisfaction to Horatia. Her modernism apparently involved cutting the roots of all sentiments. Love and marriage were to her states which were productive of many epigrams—interesting studies. She had a stock of opinions about such things made of a blend of W. L.

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George, Havelock Ellis, W. G. Robinson and the more skeptical modern specialists in sex literature. A rather brilliant conversationalist when discussion hinged upon such things, in the face of an emotional awakening like Horatia's she had little to say. But she had not been satirical. A little questioning, non-committal—her attitude satisfied nothing in Horatia's heart.

"Your sister," she went on, "only approves of something quite fashionable in matrimony and Jim Langley is a bit out of style."

Horatia laughed and telephoned Jim, first at his rooms and failing there, tried the office, where she located him. There was a delicious sense of possession in conversation with him now.

"I want to go out in the country to shake off a lot of foolish talk. Can't you come?"

The very tone of his voice over the wire brought back the glow in her heart but he told her that it must be later, that he was busy.

"Then I'll come down too and work and we'll pretend that the office is the country."

He welcomed that suggestion. She put on a different dress, her choicest one, which she had meant to save for a very special occasion with Langley. But then she meant today to be a special occasion. She meant to ask him about this Hubbell affair. She should know about it so that she could contradict false impressions, correct them. It was essential that these silly wonderings in her own mind should be laid to rest too.

As she entered the office a woman sitting at Horatia's own desk, dangling a dry pen from lazy white-gloved fingers, looked up at her and then questioningly at Langley opposite.

She was a delicately blonde person with a close-fitting black hat, smartly trimmed with black paradise feathers and a French veil. The rest of her was in harmony with the black and pale yellow of her head. She looked—not faded—but cleverly artificial, as if created in the image of some lovely picture. Her face was raised in delicate expectancy for Langley's move.

Horatia felt suddenly blundering. She was conscious of herself, awkward, and before she had time to collect herself Langley introduced her.

"Miss Grant—one of my colleagues on The Journal—Mrs. Hubbell."

Horatia had guessed the identity of the lady before he spoke. She half-hesitated. But Mrs. Hubbell was in languorous command at once.

"I knew you must be working under stimulus, Jim," she smiled.

Horatia felt affronted and bereft of repartee, but Langley inclined his head gravely.

"I am."

Mrs. Hubbell waived that point and continued. "I've just come back to town and I'm so eager to meet people. I've quite gotten out of touch. I have taken a little apartment in Hanover Street, Miss Grant, and I hope you'll come to see me there. I can promise you tea, music and

a place where gossiping women are absolutely not admitted—and only those can come who are above gossip or else tremendously gossiped about." She smiled a little plaintively, thus delicately dealing with her own situation.

Horatia rather liked it. Perhaps there was more in this Mrs. Hubbell than she imagined. She was lovely to look at anyhow.

"And we must find a place to dance, Jim," said Mrs. Hubbell, turning to him again.

"But I'm working hard, Rose. I've not much time to be frivolous."

How queer it was, thought Horatia, to hear him call another woman by her first name. Of course last night was the first time he had called her 'Horatia,' but it had seemed—— She wasn't quite sure what it had seemed.

"Then you will come to see me, Miss Grant?" Oddly insistent, thought Horatia.

"I would love to."

"Do you always work on Sunday—both of you?"

Mrs. Hubbell's questions came lightly but they were questions that had to be answered.

"Miss Grant was going to take me for a walk."

An astute glance flashed under the black hat

from Horatia to Langley.

"Then why don't you walk out my way now? Towards the South Shore and stop for tea? It's a lovely walk. I've just come back, of course, and my apartment isn't really comfortable yet, but I can usually brew a good cup of tea, can't

I, Jim? And you deserve it after working over my tiresome affairs this afternoon. I bounce in on him with my usual tangle of papers that need signing and he shows me where the dotted lines are and tells me whether I'm renewing my mortgages or signing a Bolshevik constitution. Come, both of you, walk out with me. Won't you?"

Horatia, finding decision left to her, tried to think quickly of a way out. But Langley did not help her and she hesitated too long to do anything but acquiesce.

They walked badly, for Mrs. Hubbell was hampered by her conversation and the tightness of her skirts and seemed continually to be appealing to Langley for petty gallantries. Horatia, who liked to walk swiftly and silently, found herself again unhappily awkward, moving badly and getting ahead of the others. It annoyed her that Langley had not told Mrs. Hubbell that they were more to each other than office companions, and yet she could not think what he should have said. They reached the apartment with Horatia rather dreading the rest of the encounter.

But Mrs. Hubbell pushed open her door with an apologetic smile, revealing a large living-room of most unusual charm. The ceiling was very high and the walls held few pictures so that the two great soft blue couches, armchairs and stools were comfortably spaced. A long narrow table between the windows held two delicately shaded lamps and many books. Horatia hadn't connected Mrs. Hubbell with books and while that lady went to remove her hat and "find tea," Horatia stood by the table examining the titles of the volumes. It was all very up-to-date material, much of it feminist—sparkling novels, plays.

"She doesn't read them," said Langley lightly, watching Horatia. "She has them here because she entertains the people who read or write them sometimes. But she doesn't know that she doesn't read them. I imagine she absorbs a good

deal through the covers."

"I'm sorry she spoiled our walk," said the man under his breath, "and you'll forgive me if I seemed odd. But I'd hate to have her the medium through which to announce our—feeling."

"I told Maud."

"Your sister—was she horrified?"

She smiled at him humorously. "Quite."

Their hostess came in. She had taken off her hat and the great coil of flaxen hair was even more effective than Horatia had guessed. She looked like a Saxon princess, thought Horatia—no, the lovely servant of a princess, the one who is mistress of the king.

She had not been long in town but they were not her only callers. Three men came in while they were there and one woman, a slim, well-dressed unhappy looking woman called Mrs. Boyce, or Kathleen, who smoked constantly and contributed cynicisms. She stared frankly at Horatia and the men showed great interest in

her too. Horatia sat on a straight oak chair, her color a little heightened by the attention and implied admiration and not displeased. She was conscious vaguely that Mrs. Hubbell thought she was an asset. Well-asset or not, it was interesting. Mrs. Hubbell listened to everyone and talked little generalities, sometimes foolish, sometimes keen. It appeared that two of the attendant men were married. No one asked after their wives but there were references to engagements which must be kept. With an odd sort of informality they did not seem to consider that Mrs. Hubbell was included in some activities they mentioned. Nor did she seem to expect to be included. But when they spoke of theaters and of dancing, she became an immediate authority.

"I teach them to dance," she said mockingly to Horatia, "these heavy awkward men—and then they run off and forget me."

"Did she teach you, Jim?"

"Absolutely."

Langley had a half-mocking, half-indulgent attitude towards Mrs. Hubbell that was new to Horatia. She had never seen him alternate his grave courtesy to women with anything except his new attitude towards herself.

No one spoke of Mr. Hubbell or of trouble. This room, so much a source of scandal to so many people, showed within itself only good feeling and security. There was nothing awkward or forced in anyone's tone or manner. The con-

versation was of dancing, places to dance and to eat, theaters, novelties in New York entertainments. And they talked of things and people which were behind the times and of modern points of view, reminding Horatia oddly of the talk which went on in her own apartment with Grace, and vet this talk seemed to lack a solidity. and a depth, which she felt in Grace's conversa-However, in its way this was commendable and on the right track. Horatia had an enormous respect for people of new ideas and she contrasted the "let live" of this room with the gossiping group on Maud's porch—and believed she deeply preferred this. And as they easily included her, she found herself enjoying it immensely. It was Langley who suggested going. He had been friendly but aloof a little, and only Mrs. Hubbell talked much to him. She had a special little air of appropriation for him, as if she leaned on him, mentally and spiritually, as she had leaned on his arm during their walk. And he responded with a cynical gallantry which was too trivial to be taken seriously and too deft to be insulting. Horatia marvelled at this new glimpse of him. He was no longer the man who saw clear issues in politics, who wrote angry philippics about the abuse of men, women and governments. This tall, easy-mannered man bending over a tea-table was entirely different. He seemed at ease in his pose and Horatia had a vision of him as he must have been before he had given up society so abruptly-how sought

after, how fascinating he must have been. There was a trace of the philanderer—

"Now," said Horatia, emerging from the elevator and the repeated requests of Mrs. Hubbell to be sure to come to see her often, "let's walk and walk fast."

"It's a shame to have taken you there," said Langley, "but I thought it might be an experience and you like experience. She came to see me unexpectedly—you came in, and I couldn't just see a way to explain to her that we would prefer to walk alone without giving her something to get her claws into."

"Claws—bad as that?"

"No—not really. She's really quite harmless most of the time, but she has times when she is dangerous."

"She's very good-looking."

"Always good-looking—always amusing—and she's had on the whole a raw deal."

"Jim," Horatia spoke warmly out of the gathering darkness, "what is it about you and Mrs. Hubbell? Who is she?"

He hesitated and for a moment Horatia thought with a little fear that he was going to evade her question. But he began to speak quietly.

"Mrs. Hubbell, Horatia, is just a woman not much more than that. She didn't live here until after her marriage, and I met her through her husband, who was one of my best friends. He met her somewhere out West and married her and he was one of the most tremendously—tremendously in love persons that I ever saw. He was absolutely swayed by all that daintiness and delicateness that you saw this afternoon.

"After they had been married about a year or so she began to see a good deal of other men than Jack. I was there a good deal—so were lots of others. It was a pleasant place to go and none of us realized that Jack was jealous—except perhaps Rose—I don't know. Anyway, he got hold of a fool letter that I wrote'—he stopped and Horatia was ashamed of her curiosity and passionately eager to gratify it further.

"The letter didn't mean anything at all. But Jack came to ask me—to accuse me of inconceivable outrages towards him. I denied them, of course, but he was crazy—he wouldn't believe me—and he sued Rose for a divorce and named me. Of course for her sake I should have fought it through and I think I could have cleared up Jack's mind as well as the situation, but three weeks later Jack killed himself. The thing that gave the affair so much publicity was his suicide.

"It left his wife and me in a rotten unjustified situation. But for his sake we decided to let the matter drop. There was nothing on our consciences and she was very game. She said she didn't care to clear her skirts by dragging poor Jack's feeling into publicity after he was dead. And that he had paid the biggest price. Of course I had really, however innocently, created the situation, so I felt more cut up than I can ever

tell you. So we let the matter drop and people thought what they liked."

Horatia was quiet. They walked along under the darkened trees for a long way in silence.

"So you know what no one else knows," said Jim. "It is a big confidence."

"Of course."

"And I like to confide in you."

She thanked him by a pressure of her hand on his arm.

"You know, Jim," she told him, "that whole thing needn't have happened so easily. Most of the trouble in the world comes from these women who work men up so terribly and have nothing in the world to do except love and marry."

"There's a lot to that job if it's done right."

"Not enough. I want love and—marriage, but—"

He held her closer to his side in the darkness and her voice caught for a minute.

"Horatia, you are so heavenly sweet---"

Afterwards Horatia was to remember that evening and to try in vain to recapture its charm and warmth. She felt it then as the beginning of many wonderful evenings. Jim's story had been saddening but reassuring. It had stolen none of her romance. They were closer than before. They went back to Horatia's rooms and Grace Walsh, having helped to provide supper, left them alone afterwards. Horatia told the usual callers, who telephoned, that she would not be home and laughed joyously at her casual lying.

She was altogether so joyous, so anticipatory, flying about the little kitchen, setting a table in front of the fire, for the apartment boasted a real fireplace, washing dishes, flinging gay comments about her, that she radiated it to the others. Langley's face relaxed and he laughed as she had never seen him laugh. But after Grace had gone out a sudden shyness fell upon them both. Then Horatia slipped down before the fire on a hassock and Jim came to sit beside her.

"Tell me wise things," she begged.

"It's you who know wisdom."

"I know how we shall live when we are married. I was thinking of it this afternoon. I want a place without too much household machinery—awfully few napkins and pillow-cases. But such a happy sunny place—with lots of light and color. And I want to make you so comfortable but it won't take all my time. I want to work too."

"Working after you're married is hard. I'm not sure—"

"It's the only solution," said Horatia firmly. "Otherwise you get soft. I want to work. To come home at night feeling tired and glad to get home—to meet you and not be bored with myself and my home."

"I want to care for you, Horatia, as I have never cared for anything."

"I don't want care—I want love—love——"

A cloud came over Langley's face—the faintest frowning cloud.

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"Of course," said Horatia somewhat irrelevantly, "even if I work, I don't mean I shan't want children. I do want them."

He caught her in a quick, stirred embrace.

"What do you know about children?" he mocked. And then, under his breath—"Darling, darling, I want them too. But I shall be a poor father—and husband."

And then again they fell silent and in the glow of the fire every now and again he pressed his lips to the hollow of her hand or held her hand against his cheek. They were very happy.

Mrs. Hubbell was quite forgotten. She was sitting in her living-room just then, before the spinet desk in the corner, reading and methodically sorting letters and placing them in drawers and pigeonholes. There was one letter she hesitated over. Once she made a gesture as if to tear it across. Then she reconsidered and placed it in the desk again.

CHAPTER VII

THE Journal was making money. It was February and the hopes based on the election had already been fulfilled. Circulation had increased and with it had come modest advertisers. Two extra rooms across the hall, one boldly labelled Circulation Department and one Advertising, were in charge of efficient looking young men, and the original editorial rooms were crowded by desks for two new reporters. Bob Brotherton talked boastingly of soon doing their own printing, and though The Journal was still an undersized little sheet, comparing queerly in size with the other dailies, its editorials were more often quoted in other cities than were those of other local papers.

Langley was trying his skill as a writer to its utmost in those editorials. There were no serious political issues in the city and he turned his comment with a great pleasure to national affairs and the larger political and industrial situation. What he said, being actuated by no partisanship, was really the product of deep thought and experience and keen and true. Men began to read his comments and finding good thinking and conclusive evidence kept on reading them. At first they did it warily, expecting at any moment to be

plunged into Bolshevism, but though Langley refused to fear that current bogie he recognized it in such a way that the potency and sting went out of it. He began to reassure his public by the method of assuring them that issues were not too terrible to be faced. There was a new note in his writing which took him out of the rank of merely caviling radical and put him with the constructionists.

Horatia thrilled at the new vigor in the paper. They regarded her as a mascot in the office. With her luck had come, as Bob said, and the old reporters and the new competed for chances to help her and to do things for her. Unless Langley was with her, when they withdrew before her absorption in him.

They had not announced an engagement, although the office force saw that the chief was as devoted to Horatia as they were, and perhaps drew its own conclusions. But Jim and Horatia gave them nothing definite to go upon. That decision had been reached after Maud and Langley had met and Maud with instinctive wisdom had pressed home to him Horatia's youth and inexperience and impetuosity.

"I'm sure that you might be very happy," said Maud, trying to be tactful. "But surely she can wait a little. Till she knows her own mind. It's for life." Maud looked sweetly sentimental. "You tell her how unwise it is to rush into such serious matters, Mr. Langley."

Poor Langley saw through Maud perfectly, in

spite of all her sweetness. But he had to admit that Maud had a case. He smoked a perfunctory cigar with Harvey and went home. Maud became much more sympathetic with Horatia after that visit. Her own antagonism to Langley personally had vanished or been metamorphosed into excitement at her daring in braving such a very irregular, fine-looking and interesting person as Jim. She had lost all animosity at the end of his call and Horatia, who had consented to bring Langley there only after much begging from Maud, had great fun in seeing her sister thaw and finally in watching Langley try to avoid Maud's persistent invitations. But she had even more amusement when her sister heard that Mrs. Hubbell had reappeared in the city. She broke the news to Horatia with a great air of imparting necessary scandal and was completely filled with horror when Horatia confessed not only to previous knowledge of Maud's information but also to an acquaintanceship with Mrs. Hubbell.

She offered to take Maud to call but Maud was at the point where she could bear no more shocking.

"It's dreadful and dangerous," she told Horatia. "I'm sure I don't know what you're getting into. What does the creature look like?"

Horatia told her with some enthusiasm. She had somehow come to see a good deal of Rose Hubbell. It was not that she particularly wanted to and Langley had once or twice rather

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gravely protested. But there was a timeliness, a psychological correctness about Mrs. Hubbell's invitations that made them very hard to refuse. She destroyed your alibis, too, before she asked you to do something. And then it was good fun for Horatia and really did provide varied amusement for her. Mrs. Hubbell's settled occupation was having a good time and being modern. Like so many other women she had preëmpted the right to call her kind of living perfectly modern. Grace did the same thing—Horatia did the same thing. And each of them was using the phrase modernism to express satisfaction with the plan of her own existence. Mrs. Hubbell so justified her deviations from the paths orderly people travel, Grace for the same reason as well as to excuse her fashion of intellectualizing all enthusiasms and apparently all emotions out of her life, and Horatia to define the spirit of adventure and desire to explore the depths of life which animated her. Each of them had a different mold which she called modernism and each of them poured her actions into her own mold, delighted to see that they hardened into the shape of the vessel.

Horatia was less conscious than the other two. She was trying their ways, learning their precepts of life and ways of living. She liked things about each of them—Grace's absorption in her work and Mrs. Hubbell's more decorative social skill. Mrs. Hubbell knew how to arrange, start off and keep up a dinner party, and she

danced with amazing grace and beauty. Horatia danced too, of course, vigorously, healthily, accurately—but the dancing of Rose Hubbell was a gift. "She is not a partner but an inspiration," said one of the enthusiasts, and Horatia agreed. She guided a bad partner and brought out the best in a mediocre one, but with Jim Langley she moved as if they were strung to one rhythm. There were many opportunities for Horatia to see them together. Mrs. Hubbell arranged parties at country inns and hotels, at all kinds of public places which Horatia had never dreamed of attending, and which she had always regarded as somewhat dubious. But she found them, on the surface at least, innocuous enough places where people spent an enormous amount for eating and drinking, and committed many sins of gluttony and bad taste, but no other serious ones. They danced unpleasantly sometimes and they might be noisy, but on the whole they were passable people, as full of the lesser virtues as were Maud's friends. They had a fascination about They were an unanchored lot, with them, too. no regularity even in their social intercourse. Extremely well-dressed, often beautiful, the women gave no impression of having antecedents or backgrounds. They emerged from obscurity into the dazzling glare of a hotel ballroom. They were seemingly respectable, extravagant, careless, picking at the surface of life and to some extent they typified a phase of the era—its brilliant, shop-window phase.

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Maud's friends were residents and taxpayers. They had a proper scorn of the transient and held aloof. Yet, to a certain extent, they dovetailed with the other group. The men of Maud's group were to be seen in hotels as well as at private dinner parties, mostly without their wives in the hotels, if they were married. And once Horatia saw Anthony Wentworth at the Orient.

He was with a party of men and girls at the next table. The party had come in late and Horatia had not seen Anthony until she was conscious of his bow. Then she remembered who he was and as she smiled at him she had a feeling of meeting someone of her own kind;—a sudden thought and one she indignantly refused to harbor, as, blaming him as if he had suggested it, she turned from her smile to him to plunge into conversation with a thin little man who was at her right—a thin, awkward, rich little man.

The little man danced badly. It irritated Horatia to feel ashamed of him in front of Wentworth, but she hoped that Anthony knew enough about dancing to realize that it was not her fault that she looked absurd. Why did the little man jump about so? She pressed her hand on his shoulder to steady him and then jumped away in disgust as she felt her hand squeezed in misunderstanding. They bumped into another couple and stopped. It was Anthony. He smiled and stopped too.

The girl with whom he was dancing was of Horatia's kind too.

"So you do play sometimes, Miss Grant?" asked Wentworth.

"Of course."

His partner put her hand on Anthony's arm, acknowledging a hurried introduction to Horatia.

"Weird place, isn't it?" she said. "Here, Anthony, we're holding up traffic. We'd all better be moving."

He put a deft arm about the girl's shoulders, glancing back at Horatia.

"May I have the next fox-trot?"

Horatia nodded and steered her little man away in a series of contortions to that oasis of safety—their table.

"Tired—already?" he inquired fatuously.

She sat surveying the members of her group as they came back to the table and was struck by the fact that the women looked very stupid. And the men. The men were "out for a good time," and that meant an individual reason in each case.

Langley was drawing out Rose Hubbell's chair. She was wearing a black dinner-dress that fitted her suppleness like a glove and her long black earrings set off that perfect paleness and blondness. Horatia felt that she was the redeeming feature of the party. But she didn't like Jim's closeness to Rose. She didn't like the way he was arranging the scarf about her shoulders. She reminded herself that Jim had begged her not to come tonight but to spend the evening alone with him and that she herself had insisted that they had no right to spoil Mrs. Hubbell's

party after they half agreed to come. Perhaps, after all, this had allured her—this glare and noise and excitement.

"You're so solemn, Horatia dear."

Mrs. Hubbell had slipped into the use of her Christian name, a slip that once made it was impossible to correct.

"Am I?"

"You looked like a fifteenth century saint a Renaissance saint frowning on worldliness, but secretly indulging in it."

Jim's glance was on Horatia too. She turned the conversation a little impatiently and Anthony Wentworth came to claim his dance and be extravagantly greeted by those at the table who knew him, except Langley.

They swept into the dance and silences. It was not until the encore that they spoke. He danced simply and easily and Horatia followed him well, although it was her first dance with him.

"So this is what you do for amusement."

"Sometimes," she answered, "and sometimes it really is amusing. Not tonight. Tonight the enchantment has vanished. I see only an overlighted room with horrible garish decorations and a lot of noisy women, too many of whom are fat."

He chuckled.

"I did want to see you again. And I did my best to work it. But short of making myself a public nuisance I couldn't get a glimpse."

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"I'm spending the winter with my sister. The family is gone—by family, I mean mother and father—gone South—and I live partly at home in the empty house and partly at my sister's, playing with her children."

The music stopped definitely, deaf to the en-

treaties of clapping hands.

"Can I take you for a ride one of these days? I suggest that because you said you'd like it."

"I can't tell when I can get off."

"Let me telephone and re-telephone—this proves that you get off sometimes."

She liked his half-laughing persistence.

"I'd like to ride with you in that car of yours," she told him.

He smiled down at her in healthy young friendliness and suddenly the people to whom she was returning seemed very unreal and pretentious. He did not ask any of the others for dances but went back to his table.

"You made a very handsome couple," said Rose Hubbell, sweetly. "Didn't they, Jim?"

Langley looked tired. He said merely that it was Horatia's dance with him. As before, they danced without a word.

"You were a handsome couple," he said at last.

"Please don't be silly, Jim."

"I'm such an old man and such an ass, my dear. He is a nice boy and you must play with him a lot."

"I'd sooner work with you."

"Let's not go back to the table. Let's collect our coats and get out."

He waltzed her to the door and they went home. Such petty informalities "went" with the Hubbell crowd. It was considered bad form in that *milieu* to be too conventional. Modern people went and came as they pleased. That was the idea. But Horatia had a vague feeling that, none the less, Mrs. Hubbell might not approve of their going.

Wentworth was as good as his word.

"He is parked below," said Jim whimsically, two days later. "Better go and get your ride or he'll sit there and freeze to death."

He closed the office door.

"But you might let me kiss you before you go out to be admired by dashing young men," he finished.

"I'd lots sooner stay and be kissed," complained Horatia.

"You won't, after you feel the wind in your face."

He was right. Horatia had not done much motoring and the knowledge she had of it was largely confined to being "picked up" and taken from one place to another. Maud had an electric and Rose Hubbell travelled in a hired sedan, and she had been with them often. But this was different. In this low, open car she was unprotected except for a single fur rug over her knees. Anthony drove along easily until they struck the

city limits and then was off in a burst of speed, cut-out throbbing. The state highways were almost clear of snow and they sped along through the barren country with its skeletons of trees sticking up through the snow and the little villages closed tight for the winter. Already evening lights showed in their windows

"They're like Christmas postcards," exclaimed Horatia.

"They look funny from the top when you are flying over them. You don't want to go back, do you?"

"Never less. I want to plunge into the country farther and farther."

"Maybe we can find a road that is fair driving. There is one near here which leads to a summer place of mine. And if we cut through from there to the high-road, there's a hotel where we can get supper. If you aren't afraid of country driving in the winter, let's try it."

"Of course, I'm not afraid. Plunge."

They were soon on a road which twisted among tall pine trees, gravely holding great burdens of snow. They lost all sound except the chug of the motor—all sense of distance as the car broke its way and left deep furrows of snow along the road. It slipped, skidded, growled forward—striking the ground unevenly and lurching about. Then it chugged a slow disapproval and stopped. Anthony put it into first gear and started his motor. Again it chugged,

slipped, stopped; he turned to Horatia and laughed.

"I'll get out and see what this hole is like."

She clambered out, too, and watched him inspect the hollows into which the car had run. Then he climbed in again and started with all his power on. The back wheels spun around without traction. They could not grip the smooth snow and each movement plowed their trap deeper. He shut off the power again.

"You can't get out," said Horatia interestedly.

"Oh, yes, I can."

Anthony stripped off his coat and went off into the woods. He came back with a great bundle of fir boughs that he strewed under the wheels, making a pathway forward and backward. Then from somewhere in the car he produced a shovel and dug the snow away from the wheels.

"Let me help," begged Horatia.

"Climb into the car and keep warm."

"I will not be a parasite."

"Then push those branches under the wheels while I dig."

They worked together quietly for a while. Again he started and again the wheels were impotent.

"At it again," cried Anthony.

He was exhilarated by the problem of getting out and this time he succeeded. The car, roaring with power, pulled itself over the branches and out of the hollow. Then, with all their power on, they shot ahead and drove down the dusky road. It was growing quite dark.

"This is our cottage. Think I'll stop and give the car a drink."

They climbed out and over a drifted path into the veranda.

"Jolly place in summer," said Wentworth, finding the right key on his ring and pushing the door open. "You can get a little warmer in here if you're cold."

There were electric lights and he switched them on quickly. The bright chintzes of the living-room looked warm and Horatia's sense of well-being increased. What a nice place and how pleasant to be rich! He made her sit down and put her feet for fear of chill on a cushioned hassock. Then he brought her a glass of water.

"With apologies. Next time we'll have food and a real party. If I'd thought we would have had one tonight."

"Is this your cottage?"

"Father gave it to me when I was twenty-one. We had lots of house parties here while I was in college and he liked it. I suppose he thought it kept us straight—a place like this. My sister uses it now every summer. It's a great place for kids. And now to fill the radiator and be off again to civilization."

Civilization was a small table in a hotel diningroom and a hot supper, ordered for her by Anthony without a question. Horatia was very hungry, hungry as she seldom was, healthy

though she was. And it was a pleasant hotel, like everything else in this excursion. with no music and no place for dancing—with oldish waitresses instead of waiters in dinnercoats, and with red wall-paper and gas-lightsand somewhere an inimitable chef-no, a woman cook, who put onions frankly in her soup and let the pudding confess to a cornstarch origin and made biscuits that were light as air. They talked about many things over the soup. warmed them into immense friendliness. Hora-'tia told how she had always loved weatherloved all kinds of it. rains and storms and winds. how it excited her; and how she loved all things that stimulated her energies and made her work -and how she loved her work for the same reasons; because on a newspaper one day was up and the next down so that you were always on the alert; and how you lived in touch with the raw material of events before they'd been softened or hardened or molded by public opinion. listened and nodded and the friendly old waitress had to push a platter of fried chicken before them to hush them.

Then somehow they were talking of what they had done when they were children, and little tales of West Park popped up in Horatia's mind, tales which she had almost forgotten—of the time when Uncle George had fled before Aunt Caroline's dictum that he should spank Maud and Horatia for dancing on a broken spring on the leather sofa in the living-room. It was all ir-

relevant and friendly. Anthony had his own tales. He had been a nice little boy, Horatia decided, a little boy fond of dogs and swimming. She liked his saying that the old veterinary surgeon had been his best friend when he was a boy. He told her about his mother and his sister and the brother who had looked like his father and who had died at sixteen, which saddened them momentarily. Then over the bones of the fried chicken they talked of futures—hers and his. Of the places on the earth which they would like to see. He had much more background than Horatia, having been to Germany and England before the war, and he had seen England and France again while he was flying abroad. The Europe of before the war was what he liked to talk about.

"For during the war it wasn't real. It was like a house with all the rugs up and chairs out, and arranged to accommodate a lot of strangers—that is, the cities were like that. And the country where they were fighting was no longer France or Belgium or Germany any more than the slaughter-houses of Chicago are Chicago. I want to give it time to get back and then see it again."

Not only Europe. He wanted to see South America, China, and to get acquainted with the East.

"What is the use of living if you live in a little suburb all your life?"

"But aren't you going to do any work?" asked Horatia.

"Yes—later I mean to go into business with father. I shall like exporting. It makes me proud of my own country and keeps me in touch with the others. But I need background. Then, when I ship my wheat, I'll know where I am shipping it."

She regarded him gravely.

"There's no loafer in you," she admitted.

"No—I hope not. I want to work and to live in America, of course. First of all that. I've small patience with these globe-trotters. And I want an American wife and to help stabilize the country. All this discontent is the result of trying to bring in a vicious element which we don't know how to handle because we're ignorant of the nations from which these people come."

"Don't you think we treat them badly?"

"We treat them altogether too well. We overpay them—we excite them—we give them standards of living which make them discontented."

"I think you need to see some of the budgets of laborers' expenditures," said Horatia; "they don't show any great extravagances. They must have food and clothes and—"

He broke in impatiently.

"That's beside the point. A working man and his family don't starve or freeze unless there's something wrong with them. What we ought to do is to pay wages which represent what a man earns, and not what he demands. Otherwise it's

pauperization. We will have to stop all this catering to labor. We ought to stop being afraid of it, and then it would come down to earth."

"Suppose labor quits."

"It won't, and if it did, what about it? Face it down. Why should employers all be cowards? Why are they temporizing, giving way inch by inch? Mind, I wouldn't care if——"

Horatia was fascinated. Strength of aristocracy shot from his eyes. He was amazingly handsome and if his point of view was wrong, it was at least vigorous, thought Horatia. Mistaken, anti-social, probably—but she couldn't think of a way to convince him. She didn't want to seem theoretic and sentimental—

But he had calmed down. He was laughing. "I don't see why I should spoil our evening with all this stuff. But I feel that the world's on an awfully wrong track. All this dominance by strikes. It's highwayman stuff. It's bullying. I know these social work fellows and they are a white-livered lot. And the men they try to deal with respect and understand only one thing—strength."

"But labor doesn't work through social workers. It's a force by itself." There were a few points in his illogic that Horatia could not let pass.

"It's becoming a very ugly force—you're right. But these social workers foment a lot of discontent. And the workers get surly and commence to bully. No man worthy of the name is ever

threatened successfully, but these cowards keep making concessions and concessions——"

How she liked the sheer mannishness of it! And she wondered what Langley would have answered and tried to interpret what he might have said. But Anthony hardly listened. He wanted to drop the argument or the tirade and to be personal now. He wanted to talk about her and how much he would like to do things with her. Over their large cups of coffee and cream their acquaintanceship ripened into friendship.

"I don't approve of half the things you say," laughed Horatia. "But I like you anyhow."

"Of course you must."

"We'll have to go," she sighed. "It must be eight o'clock."

"It's half-past nine," said Wentworth triumphantly. "Have you always an hour at which you must fly away?"

"And no glass slippers. Isn't it bad luck?"

He wrapped her closely in the fur robe, tucking it in with never a sentimental gesture and then they were off, skimming through the white night. At her door he said good-night.

"We must have lots of good times," he said. She wanted to tell him about Jim, but it seemed like assuming that his interest was unduly sentimental. After all there hadn't been a touch of that in his manner. And Jim had insisted that it be a secret. Next time it might be more natural to tell Anthony about her love.

She slept hard and dreamed of Anthony Wentworth attacking a laborer who was throwing bombs at his head. She was all for Anthony in the dream.

CHAPTER VIII

MAUD heard about that ride with much satisfaction. Her respect for her sister was going up by leaps and bounds. To be clever enough to land a man with a past that was frightening as well as a young and wealthy hero was a genuine achievement worthy of record. Secretly Maud dreamed of a life to be a continual flirtation, and to hint at these romantic things deftly as part of Horatia's doings made a very interesting topic. She sighed and said:

"It's all very easy to decide what you ought to do in abstract cases, but when one's own young sister is involved!"

How Horatia would have writhed if she had heard those conversations! If she had guessed how Maud made her a girl whose allure was irresistible—whose danger to men was terrific, and yet who was so innocent and unsophisticated herself that the very streetcars held danger. But she did not guess. Nor did she dream that it was Maud who took pains to inform Anthony Wentworth about Langley. Maud wanted to be connected with the Wentworths and she did not intend to have the Langley affair scare Anthony off. So, meeting him at a dance, she rallied him gaily.

"What did you do to my young sister?"

Anthony asked her for a dance, paying off his dinner debt and also thinking he would like to know the reason for her remark. They sat it out.

"What did I do to your sister? You tell me. I didn't think she knew I was alive."

"Oh, yes, she very much knows it. She doesn't say much-Horatia never does-but she certainly did enjoy that ride with you." Horatia had not mentioned it to Maud, but Maud was sinning for the greater cause.

"And I'm glad she has a wholesome man friend. I don't know if you know--"

Anthony expressed total ignorance.

"Well-you know Jim Langley."

"Oh, yes."

"He's a fascinating sort of person, you know. And Horatia has seen far too much of him. She went to work on that paper just out of devilment."

That didn't tally with what Horatia had told

Anthony about her work.

"Well-she thinks she's in love with him and he—is certainly in love with her. Of course, she's young and beautiful—any man would. But Jim Langley isn't the sort of person one would pick out for a husband for one's sister, of course. There are things we've all heard—"

"I like Jim very much, myself," said Anthony, surprisingly.

Maud drew in her horns.

"Why, we all do—he's wonderfully fascinating. But he's so much older than Horatia, and then I myself never would be sure of the stability of such a man's affection. And Horatia is so wonderful. I'm sure I don't know why I've told you all this." Which both of them knew was another falsehood.

Anthony went away leaving Maud with a feeling that he understood her better than was comfortable to know. She might have guessed that he had not been a sought-after young man for years without growing pretty astute. At his club he met an old acquaintance and after a few moments' conversation asked him,

"What about Jim Langley? How's he com-

ing on?"

"Oh, he's a queer fish. Doing rather better lately. They tied the can to him socially when he got involved in that Hubbell scandal."

"Mrs. Hubbell's back, isn't she?"

The man nodded. "And charming as ever in her mourning clothes. She says, I believe, that her great sorrow is not that her husband died but that he died insane—because otherwise she can not explain his suing for divorce and his suicide. She says, 'Poor Jack. He must have been quite insane!' very touchingly. She gets away with it."

"Langley still in her train?"

"Trust her. I suppose so. But Langley's all right. He's been doing damned good writing lately. Now if he could get a job on a news-

paper somewhere else, I believe he'd go far. Here, of course, he got off with the wrong foot."

"Must be thirty-five or six—1904, wasn't he

at the University?"

"Yes—about that. Well, that's not too late for a man to begin to make real headway. If he married the right woman. It's marriage these queer ducks need, you know."

Wentworth agreed.

"Still, he's hardly the right man for a young girl and—"

"No—not a match for youth and innocence—not Jim Langley. However, that's the kind they usually pick."

Wentworth snapped the conversation off there. Perhaps he had heard enough. He went home—not to his sister's house but to the half-closed house of his father, and sat in his own room before his fire, musing. The fire made his fine profile unusually handsome. He looked about the room appreciatively. These were the deep chairs that had welcomed him on vacations and furloughs—the Remington that his father had given him—his few books, his pipes and the big windows that almost made up one wall.

"Why should I leave it?" he murmured, and fell to smoking luxuriously.

ten to smoking luxuriously.

And so the winter slipped into spring, with Horatia revelling in the work of the office and in the thrills which shot through her at the mere presence of Langley; enjoying, too, the friend-

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liness of Anthony Wentworth and the pleasant things he devised for them to do; enjoying everything all the more because of the flashes of wonder and fear and depression with which she was touched sometimes; with Langley working and watching Horatia; with Maud making plans and buying spring clothes with morbid carefulness: with Mrs. Hubbell buying clothes too and planning little entertainments and pressing people to attend them; with the chains which bound them all together being drawn tighter and tighter, and the web of their drama being spun on the vast frame of life. Each of them undoubtedly dreamed that the pattern was different from what it was and each of them must have had a pattern clearly in mind; while Nature, the scenepainter, began to change her set and shaking the white burdens from the trees, helped them to bud again.

With the spring, too, Aunt Caroline and Uncle George came back from the South, Aunt Caroline laden with little bronze alligators and pictures of herself picking oranges and Uncle George frankly rejoicing in getting back and with a tendency to disparage everything Southern. They took Langley and the news of the engagement, which Horatia felt they should know, rather more quietly than either of the nieces had expected, but as they thought about it they realized that these two West Parkians were, after all, too far out of the world to understand all its ways and meanings. Perhaps if Aunt Caroline had

discussed it at the Ladies' Guild she might have heard disturbing things, but since it was a secret and couldn't be discussed she formed her opinions on the impression Langley made on her, which was pleasant enough. He knew how to listen interminably and defer properly and that was enough for Aunt Caroline. For those hours of listening to her over a heavy Sunday dinner, Langley was paid by Sunday afternoons with Horatia, long walks out by the lake through the mists or the winds when everything evil and unhappy seemed to drop away from him and the world was all life and energy and Horatia. The tediums of Aunt Caroline were a very little thing to bear.

Horatia kept her apartment in the city, pleading an unbreakable lease to her aunt, but she liked to get back to West Park once in a while, just for the "clean, fresh dullness" of it, she said. She had not yet learned what she was to learn, that dullness is one of the most beautiful things in the world for an harassed spirit to come back to, and that dullness is not always stupidity, but sometimes safety. So she patronized West Park mentally and laughed at herself for looking forward to Sundays there. It was natural enough that she should look forward to them as a respite from the existence about her. She was seeing a great deal of very concentrated life. When a woman shoots a man, a newspaper office has the real facts of the case very quickly. When a man suddenly retires from politics and his wife leaves

town for a few months and a fatherless child is reported in the "Birth" columns, the public may not connect the three events. But often enough the newspaper knows that there is a link. It knows, too, how so many fortunes are made and it connects them with queer obscurities. They did not reveal ugliness to Horatia willingly in that little office, but she saw and heard it because she was there and could not always be well shielded. Some of the worst of it never reached her but she saw enough. She began to know that the things that happened in the world were not based on justice and she saw that pain can not always be healed and that the wages of sin were sometimes opulence and public respect. She, who had crusaded out into the world, loving its beauty and its freshness and yearning for all it had to offer, began to see that it offered a selection of things which had to be looked over

None of this saddened her, because it had not touched her yet, but it aroused her pity and her wonder and her scorn. With the assurance of her age, it never frightened her to see and hear of trouble. These tragedies might happen to others, but not to her—not to her who had work and love. If she ever thought of her future she admitted that she would have "her share of trouble," but that trouble was so delightfully in the distance as to be merely a romantic ingredient of life—a spice—and not a thing to be afraid of. But there began to be a complexity of

very carefully.

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thoughts back of her clear eyes, where once there had been only curiosity and eagerness. Day by day it deepened and day by day she loved her work more. It brought many a chance to do interesting things—to render little services to all kinds of people. There was beginning to be an increasing number of women in politics and many of these came to make use of the "woman on The Journal." If they came merely to make use of her they usually departed without accomplishing anything. Horatia understood them very easily and disconcertingly. It was very obvious to her who had no axe of her own to grind, that some of these women had. If they came to ask her advocacy of something decent and necessary, it was easy to explain and easy to get support. But if they came to barter or exchange favors, as so many of them did, they went away emptyhanded, simply because they had nothing to give Horatia and because she desired no favors—or offices-or social advancement.

She made enemies. When Mrs. Perry Hill, president of the City Symphony Society, came down to *The Journal* office one day, she came with an air of concession and as one descended from a pedestal. She explained her purpose lengthily to Horatia. The City Symphony wanted to raise a hundred thousand dollars to put up a musical studio building as a memorial for soldiers and sailors who had been killed during the war. She told enthusiastically of the struggle of the Symphony to raise itself from a little club into a great

organization which brought the artists of America to the city to play and to sing. She outlined the tremendous need for a studio building and told of the music-students and teachers who would bless the city and the City Symphony for a place to study and teach. She touched upon the needs of a commercial age and the general low level of musical appreciation. And she ended by telling of the other great lack—the lack of a suitable Soldiers' and Sailors' Memorial. "Nothing could be a more fitting tribute to those noble lads."

Horatia frowned. "I'm afraid I don't understand."

She stopped Mrs. Hill, who was just about to repeat her entire speech. "I understand, of course, that the Symphony is a worthy organization—of course—and it has given its members much pleasure—but why should a studio building be a tribute to soldiers and sailors? What good will it do them, living or dead?"

"Only by upholding the highest ideals can we be worthy of those noble boys," answered Mrs. Hill sententiously.

Horatia persevered.

"But how would it touch them?"

"In the proposed auditorium we would have many fine concerts for everyone."

"Free?"

"My dear young lady, it costs a thousand dollars to bring great artists here."

"I see." Horatia's tone was not encouraging.

"Have you seen many soldiers and sailors, Mrs. Hill?"

"My own son was an aviator."

"I mean common soldiers. The kind that like 'Ja-da' and 'Come On, Papa,' and would go to sleep at a concert, most of them. They need—oh, tremendously, to be educated in just the things you speak of. But you can't do it by building recherché auditoriums. They need lots of things more than that—and lots of things before that. Mrs. Hill, I haven't an objection in the world to a studio building for the Symphony—I'd be glad to contribute if you'll bring Galli-Curci and Kreisler—but to go about asking funds from people on the plea that you are doing something in the name of those unfortunate boys who were killed or of those commoners who once were soldiers is to me an absurdity."

It was not the sort of reception to which Mrs. Hill was accustomed when she went to society editors.

"May I see Mr. Langley?"

Horatia opened the door to his office and ushered in Mrs. Hill, who went into some detail as to her worthy project and Horatia's inadequate appreciation. Horatia chuckled at her desk outside, wondering how Langley would deal with her, and was fully satisfied when Mrs. Hill swept out with a last overheard comment—"Of course, there are many reasons why you are taking this attitude, sir, and none of them does you credit."

She was ruined, however. Horatia ran a

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column on the new auditorium studio building and memorial, touching gently on the fact that the question of its erection was in dispute, and then she telephoned some of her friends and some of the real women thinkers of the city for opinions. Also she telephoned some architects. The article was not condemnatory. It was gently questioning, but many a business man read it and agreed heartily with the questions in it, having them ready as an excuse for not contributing. The project failed and Mrs. Hill knew why it had failed. She took to saying "there was opposition from the sort of places from which you might expect it," which was cryptic, hinted at scandal and saved her face. But even with her face saved she detested Horatia.

It was only an incident, but there were other incidents which, added together, made the "woman on The Journal" a subject of much speculation. There was the woman who wanted to be made city commissioner in order to enhance her husband's chances of getting city contracts and who failed to get Journal support. There was the case of the teacher who resigned from the schools in order to run for the School Board and work for raises in teachers' salaries. She and Horatia had many a consultation in The Journal office and many a plan hatched there finally put across the woman's successful election. It was undoubtedly true that Horatia had a straight eye, Bob Brotherton said—and not

only did she have a straight eye but she used it. She came to be in demand for many things—as a member of committees projecting new schemes, as a member of boards of directors. The men liked to have her because she had a sense of humor and of brevity in discussion and the women liked to have her because the meetings were usually a success when she came and because she never wantd to be chairman. Horatia enjoyed all these things too, but most of all she liked to get back to the office, to her own papers and her own companions and to the welcome of its familiarity and to Langley's smile, which had all the love of the world in it. The love of the work and the love of Langley ran so intermingled in her that they sometimes blended. They seemed already married in the things they were doing. The other marriage could only complete this one. So she told herself, but the "other marriage" sounded in her soul sometimes with a solemn note which frightened her a little. Her inexperience frightened her. Women on the street, with shapeless figures and worn faces, commanded respect from her for these women had been married. They knew what living with a man meant. Perhaps they had not played the game very well, but they had played it and they knew the rules.

CHAPTER IX

I you look at me like that," said Anthony, "I will kiss you and ask you to marry me. I don't know which I'll do first, but I've put both things off long enough."

This on the springiest of spring days with Horatia clambering back into the car which Anthony had stopped by the roadside until she found some cowslips; she was smiling her perfect happiness at Anthony. Her smile disappeared.

"Don't do that--"

"Which?"

"Either. I should have told you long ago, Anthony. But it assumed that you cared if I told you this—and I couldn't assume such awful conceit. You don't. It's just the day and the fun we've been having."

"But you were going to tell me---"

"That I love Jim Langley and I'm going to marry him." She held her head high and her blush was triumphant.

"When?" asked Anthony.

"I don't know—not for a year, perhaps, but sooner or later I'm—we're—going to."

Anthony twisted the wheel idly without starting his motor.

"Well—there's nothing I can do about it except to wish you joy. Langley's all right—and if you are sure you love him, it's all right. But don't let the work deceive you. That'll stop after you are married and the glamour—"

"No, indeed, I shall work right along—right along—that's our whole idea."

Anthony did not look impressed. He started the car and drove on silently. Then—

"Look here, Horatia, I know you'll damn me for a reactionary, but I want to say a few things. I ought to go away and leave you alone but I don't want to. I can't exactly admit Langley as a rival on the strength of what you say. You see what I want to give you is something very different. I want you to marry me and to—to organize our lives, but I want to assume the rough steady work and I want you to be relieved of strain." She flushed and he went quickly on. "I've seen a lot of this radical married stuff, your own name business, this both earning business, and I've never seen it lead anywhere yet. And -wait. I've seen a lot of the other kind-the awfully domestic, submerged woman. I never in my life wanted to marry until I saw you. always looked like a trap. But with you marriage would be a wonderful game—a limitless voyage, an endless happiness. I don't want you to work or wear yourself out as the women on newspapers do wear out. I want you to be strong and fine and happy. I want to see the world with you—and to plan a big useful life

with you—to do big things largely. I can't say it, Horatia, because I'm an ass. But I love you and I want to fight for you."

There were tears in Horatia's eyes.

"I wish I did love you, Anthony," she cried. "I like you awfully. But, Anthony, Jim is written all over my heart. I tremble when he's near me."

"That's not necessarily a sign of love."

"It's Jim, Anthony."

Anthony may have been thinking of what Maud had said. He turned to her pleadingly.

"Anyway let me make a fight, won't you?"

"It's no good."

"But I can't lose you like this—without a struggle."

She said nothing more. They drove back to the city and he dropped Horatia at her office. She mounted the steps feeling very much troubled, and a little outraged. Anthony was sweet, but the intrusion of such feeling on the one between her and Jim shamed her.

Jim welcomed her not at all. It was a bad and busy afternoon and Horatia had really been playing truant. He came up to her in a hurry.

"You'll have to hurry your column for the fourth page, Miss Grant. It was late yesterday and we had to hold everything up for it. Please hurry."

Horatia guessed that for that moment she was not his lover but his reporter. She flushed. And then, loyally, she gloried in his attitude. She wanted to be more than a woman to Jim. She wanted to be a part of his work.

"I've good news for you," he said later. "I've a typist coming up to see me in a few minutes. I have decided that you need a typist if we are to ever have clean copy."

They laughed.

The typist came in and Langley looked her over. She was a washed-out girl with a freckled face and stringy hair. She had come in answer to Langley's advertisement and with a memory of having seen her somewhere before, he took her into his office to question her. Finally he asked her:

"Haven't I seen you in somebody's office around here?"

"Yes," said Miss Christie, "I used to work for Mr. John Hubbell."

Langley winced. That was it. His momentary impulse to dismiss the girl she guessed from his manner.

"I left town right after that," she went on, "and I have only just come back. Mrs. Hubbell sent me away for a while and then I found work in Chicago. But it's hot and lonely there and I thought that the trouble would be all over and the reporters would leave me alone, so I came back."

"How long had you been with Mr. Hubbell?"
"Six years, sir—since I left business college.
There never was anyone who treated me so well."
Perhaps out of loyalty to any of Jack's friends

or even employees, he engaged her. For he did engage her and took her out to Horatia. "We will share Miss Christie, Miss Grant," he said. "Try to get your typing done while I am out of the office."

So Miss Christie was installed. She was not a gossip, so Horatia never heard about her position in Jack Hubbell's office or connected the drab little figure with the grace and beauty of Mrs. Hubbell. And no one thought to give Mrs. Hubbell information that might have been interesting about Miss Christie being in Langley's office. Miss Christie took an instant liking to Horatia. Horatia treated her well and treated her intelligently, admiring her clerical skill from the depths of her own lack of it. Miss Christie was drawn into the atmosphere of the office and in her quiet little way she came to love it.

There was another confidence which was not made. Horatia did not tell Jim that Anthony had asked her to marry him. She wanted to and she didn't want to. There seemed almost immodesty in telling Jim that another man loved her. And then it didn't seem fair to Anthony. She had refused him but there was no need to make the refusal embarrassing by telling even Jim.

Anthony told no one. He evidently did not consider himself out of the game. But he dropped his emotional attitude as abruptly as he had picked it up. It worried Horatia nevertheless that he turned up at many places where she went, though usually it was fun to see him and to joke

with him and ride home with him or to have him appear for supper on Sunday evenings, with a supply of food under his arm. He arranged to have Horatia meet his sister too, and Maud was all a-flutter when she heard that Horatia had been asked to dinner at the Clapps'.

"Will you borrow my gold net?" she begged.
"Why no," said Horatia. "That blue dress is good enough."

Maud had to content herself with the fact of the invitation and Horatia was more than contented with the event itself. She enjoyed the simple dinner in the lovely big house and the visit to the nursery where every device for good health and happiness had been joined together and she enjoyed the conversation of the Clapp family. At Maud's one always had a sense of striving or of smug content in attainment, but these people were not like that at all. They were living as it seemed best and wise and happy to live—luxuriously but unpretentiously. So Anthony would live, surrounded by his nurseries and his children and his servants and his pleasant diversions. They talked of Italy and of a proposed trip to China. It made her feel ignorant and little. But she looked neither ignorant nor little, with her face glowing with interest and the table candles bringing out the color in her blue gown and the dusky shadows of her hair. She looked charming and she was charming and the Clapps admitted it cordially to Anthony.

"That's all right," said Anthony. "Of course

you'd like her. The question is how did we strike her?"

Mr. Clapp was talking to Horatia during this colloquy. Anthony's sister talked to her later.

"You must see a great deal of the world from your office, Miss Grant."

"A great deal."

"It's a very fascinating sight, of course. Romantic, full of excitement."

"Why does everyone think I'm romantic on first sight?" wondered Horatia aloud.

"You are romantic. It's romantic in itself that a beautiful young girl goes out to work in a newspaper office. I know that lots of them do but they haven't yet dried up the romance. Because beauty and charm in a woman were designed for such other purposes."

Horatia frowned. "You don't really think that?"

"I think so. Beauty and charm mean love and love means life. That's why it excites us to see beauty."

"So many people say I'm good-looking now. Do you know I was a frightful little girl?"

"That's natural enough. But it's not your face or features. It's what lights you up from within."

She took Horatia's hands in both of hers as she said good night.

"Be good to Anthony," she said, "and don't let your fires be dimmed, will you?"

"I've met a splendid woman," said Horatia to Jim, next day. "Do you know Mrs. Clapp?" "She is splendid," agreed Langley. "Yes. I

"She is splendid," agreed Langley. "Yes. I was brought up with her. We went to school together. So Anthony wants you to know her.

You'd better. She is a real person."

"Jim," Horatia went on, "why don't you keep up with people like that instead of this Hubbell crowd? Don't you like nice people better than anything? Not that Mrs. Hubbell isn't nice. But after all she hasn't much to contribute, now has she?"

"She can dance," he answered lightly.

"What's dancing?"

"It's quite a lot of fun."

"But I don't see why you should need that sort of fun. I'm sure that these other people have fun too and they don't take it in dancing and going around to public places. Not that I haven't enjoyed myself a lot. You mustn't think I'm ungracious enough not to admit that it was all fun for me—this going around with the Hubbell crowd. But after we're married—don't you think we might do the other crowd a bit? It sets you up."

Jim reflected. He seemed to be thinking over his answer very carefully. Then he spoke.

"You want to realize, Horatia, that these people are interested in you and not in me. They like you and undoubtedly would be glad to have you in their circle—and in their family. They don't want me. They don't trust me and they don't like me and that's all there is to that. And if you marry me, I'm afraid they'll drop you. As my wife you won't be as—desirable."

Horatia had flushed.

"Don't, Jim,——" she begged, "don't talk like that. Why, you're so infinitely their superior—they aren't in your mental class."

"They've played a better game," said Jim. "Horatia, dear, don't you want to call it off between us? You can go to the end of the world without me. But with me you'd just be burdened. You'd be doomed to the society of queer people. And me. And you'd tire of the queer people first and then of me."

"I don't see why it must mean queer people," objected Horatia. "Why must it? Not that I don't like queer people, but I like the others too. And you most of all. And I won't give you up."

"But swear not to marry me to reform

"I swear."

That argument was over and yet they had reached no outcome and they both knew it. Horatia said fiercely to herself that there was no use in being trivial and that it certainly didn't matter. But she felt that she had stumbled upon a strange quality in her lover—a resistance—a kind of weakness too. And with the assurance of all lovers she told herself that it must not happen again.

It had not been a good time for the conversation either. They were bound for a dinner at Rose Hubbell's, and Horatia felt that she had been stupid and that all evening he would be feeling her criticism of the people she was with. In the shadow of the cab she leaned against him.

"I'm an easily influenced fool, Jim. I'm just plain stupid. And the only thing that matters is you. Repeat that, please."

Which he did, very satisfactorily.

The big rooms at Rose Hubbell's were decorated with jonquils. It was fortunate that Mrs. Hubbell, not being poor, never had to stint her setting. Her company, tonight, included two regular army officers, both very distinguished looking, the illustrator, Starling, who had recently come into such repute, Austin Benedict, a dilettante of everything, the cynical Mrs. Boyce, and two of the dancers from the Russian troupe at the theatre, who were really young women savoring much more of New York than Russia. They were a gay company. Horatia forgot her criticisms. Mrs. Hubbell's deft servant called them to a perfectly appointed supper. The atmosphere was artificial; the company was artificial; the gaiety was artificial, and Horatia knew it but she could not help admiring the perfection of the artifice. The wonder came over her again at the baffling quality in Jim which could sav that the hunt for pleasure was becoming a dangerous chase for the world and at the same time suffer himself to be part of such a company. She did not realize that his inconsistency was a common enough one among men—and that his need for

company, for society of any kind had been very great. A mind more skilled in psychology would have grasped the fact of the pride that kept him from the society of the people he had formerly known and the other pride which had kept him in this company after his calamitous public connection with it. And they sat around the table with its sparkling little service and the talk grew gayer and gayer. Settings, thought Horatia, are queer. Perhaps this in its way is as desirable as great open rooms and nurseries. If one had to choose. But she did not choose between settings. It was a glorious thought—her choice—her choice was between men.

Austin Benedict paid Horatia laughing exaggerated attentions. She must do nothing for herself.

"You working women are getting too independent," he said. "It makes us afraid. I heard someone say the other day in a certain distinguished company that you should not be a working woman."

They all insisted on the rest of it, Mrs. Hubbell in the lead.

"Why, as a matter of fact, it wasn't a man, as you all are thinking. It was Mrs. John Clapp—a discerning lady. She said 'that to think of you waiting for street cars in the rain made her shudder'—not that she dislikes either street cars or rain but because she feels that you should be protected from both."

Clouds on Langley's face, the faintest amuse-

ment on Mrs. Hubbell's and the frankest embarrassment on Horatia's.

"He delights in baiting me," she said laughingly and tried to turn the conversation. But she was helpless.

"Marjorie Clapp," contributed Mrs. Hubbell, "is trying to make the old-fashioned woman fashionable. She knows that it's the only chance the poor thing has to get back into favor. Make it fashionable to churn the butter and make the candles and that sort of thing will go. And Marjorie knows where she would shine! At a butter-churn!"

"Just where you wouldn't, Rose," said Kathleen Boyce, satirically, "the butter wouldn't what is it—wouldn't butter—for you, ever."

"Oh, I admit that. I admit a great deal of

capability in Marjorie."

"But what's the use of churning butter,"
Kathleen went on, "when you can buy it in beautiful molds and what's the use of devoting all your)
time to a house and family when there are maids and nursemaids?"

"I don't think it's any good with maids and nursemaids having too much command," said Horatia. She had forgotten that the conversation hinged on her. "They are all right for hotels. But a house has to express a woman—just as my aunt's house in West Park with its Nottingham lace curtains and bronze alligators and coldly clean floors expresses her and just as Mrs. Clapp's big, easy house expresses her."

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"I wonder what yours would be like. Tell us what you think."

Mrs. Hubbell's question was light and Horatia should have parried it. But one of her moods of seriousness had come on her and she wanted to bring them all into it for a minute. She wanted to tell them before Langley what their home would be like. It was one of the revelations that an older person would have refused to make for fear of mockery but Horatia's youth drove her on.

"My house? My house won't be perfect because of lots of lacks. But I can tell you what I'd like to have. A house, quite large and spacious with just as little furniture in it as was necessary. Open spaces and deep halls and built-in settees with bright cushions where you could lie when you came home tired and where children could play and forget their toys. Room for everyone so no one would irritate anyone else. Fireplaces so that people could dream before them. A few guest-rooms for friends who wanted to come when they were tired or when they especially wanted to see me,—guestrooms with the morning sun so that any tired person would wake up cheerful. too much service and not too many meals Breakfast, maybe, together, and together. then everyone would be free for the day. Trees about the house-big trees which would seem part of it. I would like a hospitable house and a free house. You see I was brought up in one in

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which crumbs on the floor were a mortal sin. It's an atmosphere instead of a particular place that I want. I just get it vaguely—a long dark oak hall—with the light through windows at the back——" She broke off with an appealing half-laugh and half-sigh and the most involuntary look at Langley—"But I shall have to get the atmosphere in a six-room apartment probably. And I'm sure I can. And I want to."

Then somehow she knew she had hurt Jim again and she stopped abruptly. Her description had been far too serious for the company and they were embarrassedly sober. But Mrs. Hubbell did not let go, quite yet.

"It was a beautiful description, dear," she said, "wasn't it, Jim?"

Jim gave her a quick side look and Mrs. Hubbell stopped. She could afford to, for Horatia wondered about that look. She felt she had made rather a fool of herself and had a sudden memory that Jim and the blonde lady were very old friends.

"I," said Benedict, "want what I have achieved. A few rooms for which I pay rent and not taxes. A man whose services I can share with my neighbor, thereby reducing his wages. A shaving brush, the morning *Times*, a telephone and a light beside my bed. Keep your ambitions down, my friends, and you'll be happy."

"What I want," the Russian dancer broke in, "is a suite at the Plaza. Perfectly good enough

for me. And a bank account to keep the hotel clerk off my neck."

"And since wishes aren't horses, let's change the subject before our discontents run away with us," said Jim quietly.

They rolled up the rugs in the living-room and Kathleen Boyce played jazz music and the Russian dancers gave themselves over to the army officers, who danced beautifully. Horatia preferred to watch them, she told Jim, and he watched with her until Mrs. Hubbell, gay and informal as hostess, came up to claim him. Then Mrs. Boyce, resigning her place to the Victrola, joined Horatia.

They watched Mrs. Hubbell's grace in silence, paying little attention to the others.

"They dance perfectly."

"Perfectly," agreed Mrs. Boyce. "Rose taught Jim to dance. Taught him other things too. He is her prize possession, you know."

Horatia longed to cry out to this faintly smiling woman at her side, "He is my possession," but she did not dare for fear of what it might lead to. And Mrs. Boyce went on:

"Of course Jim's a romanticist. He'd stand by any woman whose name was connected with his and whom he dreamed that he might have hurt. But I've sometimes wondered if she hasn't hoodwinked him a little about that whole affair. It may have been a pity that Jack Hubbell decided that he wouldn't take it through the courts."

Horatia said nothing.

"You are probably damning me for not minding my own business. Of course you are. But, my dear child, you're no match for Rose. If you want Jim Langley, get him out of this crowd. It's not much good. And it's certainly not good for him. Rose Hubbell may not make men respect her but she doesn't care."

"Please," begged Horatia and Kathleen waved Benedict to come and dance with her. Horatia expected that Jim would stop and join her but he kept on dancing. The illustrator was informally reading a magazine. She sat alone, with an odd sensation of being a wall-flower at a children's party.

"Perhaps," she thought, "my face is drawing down at the corners and soon my lip will quiver. I must look natural. There's nothing to be silly about." But for all that the forlorn little feeling

persisted cruelly.

Then, just as she thought she could sit there no longer, and was trying to decide whether to break in on the illustrator's reading or to go out into the other room, the music stopped and with the easiest grace in the world Langley and Rose both came towards her. Not in the least apologetic. Smiling at her gaily. No more hurt expression on Langley but a look of sheer enjoyment which made him look young and debonair.

"You have a gift, Rose. I was always awkward on that turn. I never understood it before. But when you get it, like most other things, it's

easy."

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"Horatia thinks we are silly, Jim."

"Horatia, is right. We are silly."

He took Horatia out on the floor and they danced well, silently, but without abandon.

"I love you," whispered Langley.

Horatia's voice was low as she answered:

"Ah, but I love you—utterly—completely."

Perhaps then Langley longed for the chance to take off ten years of his age as men do long once in a lifetime when a great opportunity comes too late. How was he to explain—or fully understand himself—that only in the strength of very young emotions is everything else automatically shut out except the emotions themselves and that later the beauty is in relating love to a life already known?

CHAPTER X

H ORATIA made another effort to stop Anthony. She found herself disturbed beyond all control by this love of his. It seemed to her that such a thing had no right to exist in the same world with her feeling for Jim. She did not want to hurt Anthony—she did not want to argue about his love. She merely wanted his love not to exist—not to be there to affront her. If ever a woman's psychology was pure in trying to arrest the affections of a man, Horatia's was. So it was not enough to refuse Anthony. He must be recreated into the jolly friend that he had been. She would not have him as a lover. All this she tried to tell him and of course in the telling she laid herself open to misconstruction.

For Anthony could not see but that the discussion itself was a sign of his growing importance in her eyes. To him it probably would have been natural enough to have her refuse him and then decline to see him at all. But that did not suit Horatia. She wanted him to be just a friend—to stop loving her. He was comparatively acquiescent. He told her that he thought she might some time come to care for him, and when she protested in real horror, he was gentlemanly enough to yield the point and adjust his conver-

sation to the comfortable tone she wanted. It cheered Horatia immensely. She was too inexperienced to know that men have always yielded to women in form when they won a victory, in fact. There was a new vigor in Anthony's walk as he left her after that.

That talk straightened "everything out," according to Horatia, and she went to her window and drew a long breath of relief. She was clean again and fit for Jim. How tremendously she loved Jim that day! She wanted to bring him something finer, something cleaner, something purer than anyone in the world had ever brought to any man. She wanted to bring him all that the world could give a man. Her ardor almost frightened him that night. It was so great—so tempestuous.

"How can women play with men they love?" she wondered. "I suppose it's because they don't love. You're warned to keep your distance—to give a little at a time. Why I—I want to give everything in the world all at once—everything. And then I wouldn't have enough. I want to do foolish, extravagant things to show you my love—only because it is love they wouldn't be foolish or extravagant."

"Do you know how I love you?" asked Jim. "I love you as a man loves a woman once in a long, long while, so much that all the primal things, the violent things have been refined out of it. I love you so much that the lightest touch of your hand on my shoulder turns me to fire and

so much that if it would harm a hair of your head or bring a shadow of trouble to your soul, I'd never see you again. I love you because you are beautiful of body—that least and first—and I love your fine, clean soul which is like a candle-light before the altar of life, and I love—most of all, your warm, warm heart that warms everything which is near it at all. No—most of all I love you and I'd love you if you were ugly and vicious and cold—because you'd be you. You attached me and you'll never shake me off now."

No—for all his protestations that he would give her up if it were best for her, his arms around her did not seem to be willing to even give her up for a moment. They were talking a little more practically now. The Journal was really commencing to pay and an amazing offer had come to Langley offering him an editorship on an Eastern paper. But he had refused it, with Horatia's connivance, because they both felt that they did not want to leave so soon the lake and the city which had brought them together and the familiar office.

"A flat it will have to be."

"But some day there will be the house with the dark oak hall," he promised. "Some day there will be those sunny guest-rooms. Once, Horatia, I had a little money and I lost it all. It was what my father left me. Well, I never missed it. I didn't care—much. But now I covet that money. I see things in windows that I want to give you. I want to smother you with presents." "You're a capitalist in spirit for all your protestations!"

"Don't you dare tell anyone, but I've the making of a rare one in me. All that I care about just now is giving things to you—myself and other things."

"You care about your work."

"Ah, but that's so that I may be more worthy to give myself to you."

"But this flat business!"

They thought perhaps that they could marry in the autumn. Late autumn with the leaves turning to wonderful colors and the lake shimmering with the first cold winds. It would put spirit into that most marvellous of honeymoons. And after that they would come back to the office—and the flat.

"Let's look at flats and furniture—sort of surreptitiously——" begged Horatia.

He was stern.

"If this is to be a secret," he said, 'how on earth can we go about asking for furniture? Now I will tell you anyway that we are not going to buy much furniture. And I will show you why we are not if you will call on me next Sunday morning."

"You have furniture of your own."

"I have a few nice things—not awfully valuable—but you shall see."

She saw them and they were far more lovely than he had told her. His little apartment was much more luxurious than she had imagined. There were small, beautiful rugs and several pictures which had signatures which startled Horatia, and an inlaid table stood beside a great velvet chair and faced another chair, a rocker, low-seated and high-backed, not at all a man's chair.

"I suppose I was rocked to sleep in that chair," said Langley whimsically.

He showed her the dining-room with its smooth-oiled mahogany table and then laid his hand lightly on the panel of the other door.

"In there," he said softly, "is the bedroom furniture which was my mother's. Would you like that too?"

The color faded from Horatia's cheeks and the gravity of her eyes deepened.

"I want it," she answered.

Her pallor frightened him.

"You're not afraid of me, are you, darling?"

"A little afraid of life—not you—and the curious thing is that I don't know what part of life does frighten me. It's only that sometimes there seem to be so many things I don't know yet—or understand——"

Langley often thought of her as she was when she said those words, standing in his shadowy living-room, with the light from the window on her face half-turned away from him towards things she did not understand. So young—so instinctively brave and so instinctively honest. And so beautiful.

"I shall tell you of as many as I can and there

will be things we both don't understand that we must find out together. But we will go—hand in hand—with our heads up—to meet them."

She turned and caught his hands in her own outstretched ones.

"Oh, let us start, soon—soon," she begged. "I

want to go with you."

"Yes-soon," answered Langley. His head was high and his face the face of a young man. "Soon-my darling-wife."

CHAPTER XI

A ND then suddenly came one of those swift unexpected tragedies which knock the heart out of life for those who see and must witness them. This came on Horatia like a thunderbolt. Life was magnificently clean about Horatia—clean and beautiful—and then it was sullied by a contact.

She had told Grace Walsh that she was to spend the night with Maud and then she changed her mind. Going home from the office late and entering quietly so as not to wake Grace, she heard voices. It was midnight and she wondered. The voices were from Grace's room, not from the sitting-room, and Horatia stood weakly still in the dark and heard them. One was a man's and the other was Grace's and they were saying things, half-laughing things which turned Horatia weak and sick. Somehow she stumbled out of the room—somehow got quietly down the stairs and out of the building. She walked to Maud's blindly and when Harvey let her in said that she was very dizzy and must go straight to her room. Not to sleep. To listen to what Grace had said and the man had said and to see things of horror. Life was like that, was it? ugly? Was that love too? They had used the

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word—that word—her word! No, no, no, she cried to her tortured brain—not love. But Grace. Why should Grace be like that? Had she always been? Grace who was fond of her. She was agonized not by the facts as much as by her vision, her hearing of them. Abstractly her brain tried to argue. Argue modern things she had heard. Suddenly she understood many things that had puzzled her about Grace—understood conversations which they had had together. She tried to get Grace's view of this, tried desperately. Grace had a right to live—to be herself, to act as she pleased. But her senses, her heart kept denying that—kept suffering its denial.

Harvey told her flatly at breakfast that she must cut out the night work if she didn't want to ruin her health—and her looks. He took her downtown in his car and left her at the office for Jim to worry over. Her white face and her shocked eyes told Jim that something had happened. But she could not tell him. She worked mechanically, facing the time when she would have to see Grace.

At six o'clock she took advantage of Jim's absence to slip out and go over to the apartment. Grace was there. She was paring potatoes in the kitchenette. Sometimes they got their own supper.

Horatia did not take her hat off. She stood and watched the knife scrape the skin from the potatoes. Grace looked at her.

"Why, what's wrong, my dear?"

Horatia's knees were weak and queer. She felt herself apt to faint if she were not very, very slow and precise in what she said.

"I came back last night and heard—you."

Grace's face turned scarlet and then a different color—a color mixed of anger, shame and defiance. She seemed about to speak several times—several ways—and at last she succeeded.

"I really don't see how it concerns you," she

said, viciously.

"No," said poor Horatia, "I suppose it doesn't. Only I can't stay here."

Grace's expression hardened to an ugly sneer.

"So virtuous as all that," she said. "Do I say a word when you go to Jim Langley's rooms? Don't play the high and mighty lady with me."

Grace had lost her intellectuality like a dropped cloak. She was pure, raging passion, discovered in sin and accused. But Horatia did not stop to analyze. She was stricken with horror. She

couldn't speak and Grace raged on.

"You're like all the rest. I knew you'd be or I'd have told you. Pretend to be broadminded and yet scurry to get behind a fence of conventions if your own skirts are involved. What business is it of yours if I have a lover? If he isn't married to me? He would marry me if he could and if I'd let him. He's married now to one of the silly fools who runs around with your sister. He can't stand her. He hates her presence—and he loves me and I love him. We get what we can and then you come with your face

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of horror to preach to me—to tell me I'm not fit to live with! Fit to live with! I'm fit as the rest of the hypocrites that you live with. Women or men—they're all alike—covering their traces better. I wonder where your brother-in-law spends some of his nights when he has to go out of town. Do you think those silly little doll-faced prattlers can hold a man? As for you—you go as far as you dare with Langley. How do I know how far you go? I don't spy on you when you go to his rooms on Sunday! Not fit to live with! God, this prating of righteousness—sex righteousness, the most silly lying farce in the world. There is no such thing as righteousness. But there is love and passion, little white-face."

Still Horatia did not speak. Before this ugly situation she had become powerless to attack or to defend. She had neither weapons nor skill for such a fight. And Grace tore on, through a tirade of defense and condemnation, revealing her shattered pride and her spirit torn by the sense of guilt, of satisfactions and strangled discontents, trying to believe in its own rectitude. But poor Horatia could not analyze it then. She was only able to see facts and to hear the anger and accusations against herself. She knew instinctively that Grace did not mean them but she had said them and in the saying had irretrievably marred and stained some things in Horatia.

Stray phrases hit her ear cruelly. Grace was now condemning her—now men—now women.

"Modern women! Modern with your tongues!

Love should be free. Love should be above conventions. How often you've said it! And I with my real beliefs did not dare to tell you how I chose to carry out your phrases because I knew that you were only talking. Doing lip service to modernism! Easy, isn't it? But before modernism—naked—you'd be horrified and pursing your shocked lips and running for veils."

Horatia sank down in a chair and covered her face with her hands.

"My God," cried Grace, "why shouldn't I do as I please? Why should I say one thing and act another? If I know marriage is rotten why should I hold to its forms? Haven't we all said marriage was archaic—love should be free?"

There was no answer.

"Come now, isn't that one of the great Sunday afternoon subjects for discussion?"

Horatia nodded. "But this is different."

"Why different?"

"Because it is furtive and hidden—don't you see it's—ugly?"

"It's hidden because of just such cowards as you. You for whom I am not fit!"

"It's not a question of fitness. I don't condemn you, Grace. Perhaps you are right. Maybe I am cheap and cowardly. But I can't—live with it."

Generations of Grants and Ferrises living in holy wedlock speaking through her—rash current phrases, fine modern leniencies dropping from her before the facts of furtive illicit love and adultery. The education of modern thought and modern living dashed to the ground by the healthy instinct of race, healthy still in spite of its soaking in strong, acidulous, dangerous ideas. Poor Horatia—so feeble in her humiliation and yet stronger than ever before because there was only one thing that she could do. Living with Grace was not a debatable issue. It was an impossibility.

"Heaven knows that I don't want to live with you," said Grace hotly. "But I would like to have you see that wherever you turn you can't do more than keep your own skirts clean. You can't guarantee the skirts of others."

She walked up and down furiously and Horatia, not looking at her, knew nevertheless how she looked. Her strong figure, her neat hair bound about her head, her smart tailored gown did not make a proper figure of passion but of restraint. But the passion was breaking through the physical restraints.

"You were born in West Park," Grace went on, "and brought up in a quiet orderly way, told nothing ugly, seeing nothing ugly. I wasn't. I was born in a cheap hotel in a small town. Two years afterward my mother either skipped or died. I suppose she skipped. And my father sent the woman who kept the hotel a little money to keep me. He was a travelling salesman—used to drop in now and then because I and the town were on his route. I lived in that place where people came and went—some of them decent

enough—pale, dragged, gossipy women with fat, bloated men or fat, big-breasted, lazy, powdery women, and their men. They were not too attractive nor too delicate in their talk-these respectable ones. And there were others too—not decent and not caring to be. I heard thingssaw things. I was well instructed in dirtiness young. And I couldn't stand it. I broke away and went to work in a woman's kitchen when I was fourteen. I washed dishes and cooked and made beds for domestic decency. So it was called and rated. I learned how cheap and dishonest a thing decency is. I was with that woman for two years. I helped her when her fourth child was born. And the sordidness—the hideousness of that unwelcomed birth ground some facts about modern decency into me. They rowed over that baby—talked about 'blame'. The fears—the backbiting—the lack of love or even respect! used to wonder what those people started on and then and there I vowed never to marry.

"Well, I saved enough to go to High School. I had been through grammar school. I started High School when I was sixteen years old and I got through in three years. Meantime I was a 'mother's helper'. The irony of that phrase! I helped that mother by washing clothes and dishes and slaving way into the night sometimes. It was a hard little town. I wanted to go to college so I moved—with my package—it was a small package—of clothes to the University town—got some work, earned enough to start on and to buy some

clothes and then went to the Dean to ask about working my way through. The Dean was the first woman I had ever met who seemed to care what happened to me. It was a queer experience. Funny, wasn't it, the reputation I made in college. By the time you came on the scene I was quite a celebrity, going home for vacations with girls who were met at the stations by limousines and weaving a hazy fiction about my dead parents and good connections. Then—after college—jobs were easy.

"But I wanted other things by this time. I found myself wanting things I never had. Love—men——" Horatia, watching her now, saw her standing still, looking back at her own life with angry, thwarted eyes.

"I didn't want marriage. I had no illusions about that. Marriage was quite the ugliest thing I had seen. But I did want a lover. And I found I could love—I can love! I've had three lovers in five years, and I believe in marriage less than ever. The men have all wanted me to marry them. But I won't. People use marriage and then it uses them. It is meaningless. More and more people cheat it and pretend to hang on when they are sick of each other. When my lovers and I are through—we're through. I tell you that that man who was here last night hates the sight of his wife. She must know it. Yet she rides in his car and takes his money and eats at his table. Isn't that degradation?"

Horatia did not answer and Grace stepped

talking too, for a while. They were aware of the awkwardness of the pared potatoes and the interrupted preparations for supper, which seemed to insist on a continued intimacy.

"Will you have supper?" asked Grace, with bitter casualness.

"I'll help get it," answered Horatia gently and turned her attention to details, striving, striving all the time to understand and help. They set the informal table and faced each other over it.

"Don't you want to stay here? I'll go," offered Grace brusquely later.

"No—no—" Horatia protested. "I'm the one to go. I really ought to go to stay with Maud's children for a while anyhow. She and her husband want to go to New York for six weeks and they have been asking me to stay at their house while they are away. I didn't promise but I will go."

"Tonight?"

Horatia hesitated.

"No," she answered bravely, "tomorrow."

Suddenly Grace burst into tears.

It was the first time that reality had closely touched Horatia and for the first time she realized that in dealing with personal realities, theories have little value unless they have been tested by experience. She had never been one of those who sought after modern ideas for their own sake but she had accepted easily and as a matter of course all the talk which went with her time—talk which was lavish in its use of phrases about the rights



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of the individual, freedom of thought, antique conventionality and the new everything. She believed in no church and she laughed at Maud's rigors as to what was and what wasn't proper. In college she had often expressed an opinion strongly indignant that women should be required or expected to be more chaste than men and held the double standard in abhorrence. And yet she was horrified to discover that the man in this case did not excite her really. He was condemned but it was a passionless condemnation that she gave him. But with Grace her horror at finding that Grace had made use of this little apartment for a furtive love affair turned her sick and yet miserable lest her fastidiousness might be only cheapness. The saddest point in the little tragedy was that Horatia could not know that she was learning one of the deepest truths which she would ever learn—that through all intensive modernism and intensive conservatism runs a thread of instinct that is stronger than either—a fundamental morality which drives the most hidebound conservatives into most radical actions and the most dangerous radicals into the most conservative actions. The thread may be tangled, and never untangled by some people in either group but, unbroken, it runs through life and always will, through Bolshevism and monarchism. Always irrefutable the fact confronts us that life is bigger than politics or economic conditions or theories about either.

When Grace and Horatia said a restrained

good night and went to their bedrooms Horatia threw off her clothes and jumped into bed.

"If this affair was a block away it wouldn't bother me at all," she said to herself determinedly. "I've decided to leave. Now I must go to sleep."

It was easy to say and impossible to do—easy to whip her actions into conformity but not so easy to control her thought. She was shivering with unpleasant contacts and she found herself standing on the floor in the darkness, longing to dress and run away again. She tried to laugh, to be "sensible," assuring herself that all she needed was sleep and rest. But there was no such thing as sleep. The darkness was not soft and quiet. It was full of thoughts and pictures which did not soothe but tortured her. She had always let her last thought be of her lover. Now she wanted to forget about all men—even Jim. Grace had said—and so her mind raced on through the darkness and morning came again.

To be sure that there could be no more discussion she telephoned her sister at once and Maud's fiat definite tones coming over the wire, expressing pleasure at the news and plunging at once into a world of detail, reassured her. It was reassurance just to realize that Maud was getting up from her breakfast table and that her mind was anxiously turning on the problem of buying a new wardrobe trunk or making her old one "do." There was something cheering in the impression that much of life was made up of just such innocent trivialities.

But at the office Jim saw the ravages of the day before increased and she seemed unnatural to him, as if she was trying overhard to be natural. He asked her to come into his office and shut the door on her entrance.

But at the touch of his arms she looked so pathetic that his worry deepened.

"You're not yourself, darling."

She shook her head weakly.

"I'm quite all right."

"No—circles and shadows under your eyes—troubles in them—pale cheeks—what is it about?"
Horatia tried to smile and failed miserably.
"Tell me. dear."

He was so easy, so unpassionate because of some wise instinct that she turned to him and the story came out. Grace had played her game silently and well, for Jim had not suspected the situation.

"You must leave her, of course," he said with quick masculine intolerance for this business which affronted a woman dear and pure to him.

"Pull my skirts aside—I suppose so," she said drearily, "that's what hurts. My own reactions."

"But you can't help her by living there—and she had no right to expose you to such a situation. It's damnable."

She had never seen him so excited or so very angry. He strode up and down, his mouth set, eyes smouldering. She found that she was feebly arguing for Grace but there was reassurance in the way he swept her arguments aside. He

wasn't interested in Grace. He didn't want to discuss Grace. What she did was her own business. Let it go at that. But to involve Horatia in a living arrangement and not explain her own method of life—that was outrageous.

Suddenly he stopped and held up her face in

his hands.

"And you have been thinking that all men——"
Her eyes wavered and his filled with tenderest pity.

"No, darling," he said, quietly, "it's not true."
Confidence swept Horatia's soul like a clean
wind. She lifted her eyes to her lover again.

CHAPTER XII

AUD departed for New York, radiant in new clothes and expectations of others. She set her house in order and gave Horatia a detailed list of instructions as to what to do on every usual occasion and in every emergency. And Horatia found a surprising pleasure in what she was to undertake. The Williams were to be gone two months and she would have full charge of everything. It would be interesting and stimulating to run a house and supervise the care of children. She liked Maud's children and she liked the housemaid and the cook. It would be very easy and to Maud's anxious worries she turned a laughing face and a competent spirit. She stood, with Jackie held by one hand and the baby in her arms, waving good-bye to their parents, and when the car was out of sight took her charges to the nursery with a delightful new feeling of personal responsibility.

After the flat, Maud's house gave her a sense of expansion. To have her breakfast served daintily at a dining-room table was refreshing after months of getting up hurriedly and getting the milk and orange marmalade and rolls together herself. To come back at night to a comfortable house where there were two or three rooms into which she might wander instead of

the small living-room of the flat was restful and to go up to the nursery was the most fun of all. The children were often in bed or just being put to bed by the housemaid and their smiles and chuckles at the sight of Horatia if she arrived in time to give them the finishing touches and tuck them in was one of the nicest happenings of the day. Their helplessness, their recognitions, their constantly growing intelligence, all fascinated Mingled with her natural love for them was wonder too and constant speculation. was not unlikely that in a few years she might have children too, children for whom the responsibility would be always hers. She began to respect Maud, Maud being absent and nonirritant, for this achievement of two children. Two children brought into the world and preserved in perfect health. It was no slight thing. It was a big thing—a big success.

There was further speculation in her mind when she paid her sister's bills. Dimly she had known that Harvey and Maud spent a great deal of money but she had not guessed how much. Their home was simple and it was not until she had checked over a great sheaf of bills which came in at the end of Maud's first week of absence that Horatia found that the simplicity was the expensive result of many hands, many shops, many materials all blended smoothly together into a domestic interior. The total of the bills appalled her. She had laughed at Harvey's insistence on leaving her a sum in the bank, which she

declared "would last a year." At this rate of expenditure she saw that it would possibly last the two months of her sister's absence. The most unexpected things cost so much—in the kitchen and in the nursery. And a new speculation bordering on worry came to take the place of those first rapturous thoughts about her own children. She and Jim had figured on living on a sum which did not represent a tenth of what her sister was spending. Granted that she could save this and that and cut out this and that expense, could she even then—— She decided that she must ask Jim.

Jim came every evening when she did not go to the office. He was especially tender these days as if he were trying to completely and surely eradicate the scar which Grace had left on Horatia's mind. They were beautiful, peaceful evenings with the house quiet and full of the spirit of the sleeping children, and sometimes they imagined that it was their house, that they were at home at last.

"Have you any idea how much this costs, Jim," asked Horatia, "this peace and order and well-keptness?"

"I can only guess at it in horror."

She told him and he whistled.

"Worse than your guess?"

"Yes."

"I wish I had some money of my own," said Horatia, regretfully. "We'll have to devise ways of making *The Journal* pay better." "If I left The Journal I could get a fairly big

salary on some other paper, perhaps."

"And have your policy dictated by a lot of rotters! No indeed. We'll stick to *The Journal*. It brought us all our luck. Something will happen. And of course I could live on lots less than Maud can. But I want my house even if it's only a flat to have dignity too—not to be messy and frumpy. You want that too."

"I don't think that I want anything in the world except you and to give you everything I

can."

So they buried the difficulty in words and secretly Langley puzzled over his account books and secretly Horatia made budgets, strange and startling budgets, of household expenses with estimates of the cost of things reduced to minimums which would have shocked Maud or made her laugh. But even then——

The money part did not bother Horatia seriously. It was fun to puzzle and to plan. And for three weeks things ran smoothly. Then the housemaid was sent to the hospital one day for an operation for acute appendicitis, and for a few hours confusion reigned. Horatia, to whom the cook telephoned, left her work to Bob Brotherton and came home in haste. She encouraged the terrified housemaid and got her safely into the ambulance and engaged a nurse for her at the hospital. Then the cook went shakily back to her own work and Horatia started to put the children to bed. She had often done it before, but

always before Ellen had laid things out for her and the nursery had been in order and the children fed. She found tonight a nursery in the wildest confusion, two cross children and no supper ready for them. She consulted Anna, the cook. Anna was but temperately helpful. She told Horatia what they had for supper and how to prepare the baby's food but she did not suggest helping her. Horatia struggled with a maze of dishes, formulas and prohibitions and finally bore the tray up to the nursery. It was an hour and a half before she came down, but then the room was in order and the children in bed and quiet. Anna, who had kept dinner waiting for half an hour, did not seem especially cooperative. Now that the shock of Ellen's illness was over and a call from the hospital reported her as resting easily, Anna seemed inclined to worry lest she be imposed upon. She told Horatia that Ellen always dressed the children at half-past seven and that she could not both get breakfast and dress them. Also she wondered if she could care for them during the day when Horatia was at the office. Horatia soothed her fears. Maud had left no instructions as to what to do in case one of the servants had appendicitis but Horatia guessed that the best thing was to engage a temporary housemaid. In the morning she promised Anna that should be done.

She was up early to dress and feed the children—but in spite of her early rising she found that she had to eat her own breakfast very

hurriedly and then was late at the office because she had to go to three employment agencies. Rather discouraging places, the employment agencies. They showed her long waiting lists of their patrons but promised to do what they could. Horatia had no choice but to be content and so she went to the office and plunging into an exciting day forgot Maud's household for a while.

But returning that night she was forced into the thick of domestic difficulty again. Anna was distinctly cross. The children were cross. There were many loose ends for Horatia to tie—many duties to perform which seemed especially wearying after her long day at the office.

"Domesticity needs a lot of oiling," she told

Jim.

He made things easy for her in the office but even with a great many things done for her there Horatia found both the office and the domestic burdens heavy. Savagely she spurned a little thought which crawled into her mind at times. "Of course I can manage my house and my work, when I am attacking my own problems. It's only because this is something I am not used to, something that I have to carry out according to the plans which other people have made for me." But none the less the thought crawled back again, suggesting that Maud had money and everything to make things easy for her and that even then the care of two children and a household was a heavy task when it was coupled

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with even eight hours of office work. She did not take that problem to Jim. It was hard to phrase and there seemed no very obvious way to solve it except by her own efforts. They wanted children and a home and she must work. She was doubly sure that she would want to work, especially when Anna's complaints and the children's restlessness were forgotten in the busy routine of the office—and yet there were times when just to get up in the morning and go to the office seemed too hard a strain. Suppose that after her marriage she should feel it too hard?

They could not find a new housemaid. employment agencies seemed futile and advertisements, even in The Journal, brought such dilapidated creatures in answer that Horatia could not bear to entrust the children to them. For a few days they tried a trained nurse with whom Anna quarreled bitterly and who finally left because Anna insisted that she should make beds and do the dusting. Anna was continually on the defensive. After a visit to Ellen she felt it rather unfair that she should not have had an attack of appendicitis and have been sent to a pleasant hospital where her meals were brought to her on a tray and she was watched over by nurses. Ellen continued to get better. That was the bright spot. In a few weeks she would be as well as ever and in the meantime, if Anna would only stay, Horatia felt that she could manage. She refused to write Maud that she was having difficulties. Maud had counted on this trip and after all there was nothing very wrong.

"Nothing except that you are wearing out under my eyes," complained Jim.

But a worse complication came and after it had come, Horatia felt that all had been easy before. Jackie, with the astonishing suddenness of children, had been well when she started for her office in the morning and when she came home at night he was sick and feverish and refused to eat his supper. She put him to bed and consulting Maud's lists found the name of the baby doctor and summoned him. He was a gentle-voiced, pleasant young man who after one look at the boy developed a frightening air of seriousness and told Horatia to send for a nurse. She asked him if she should telegraph Maud but he shook his head.

"It's not much use. He's poisoned somehow—eaten something or some things that he shouldn't have eaten. The chances are that he will come out all right by tomorrow, but if he doesn't she couldn't get here anyhow. You can wait until morning. He will probably be all right. But it will mean prompt work now. Try to get a nurse from the children's hospital."

A tangled night. Horatia remembered the coming of the nurse and her own quick confidence that the uniform would help somehow in bringing Jackie through. So much skill surely—— She remembered Jim's coming and her amazement that his arms could not comfort her—that noth—

ing could help her except the assurances that the poor, tossing, wailing little boy would probably be all right. She heard him cry as they did things to his little body which hurt before they relieved it. She had constant pictures of the way he had looked two days before and she could hear his jolly little laugh. She had an agonized sense of the terrible waste of life there must be when children died. And once she turned to Jim with a frightened cry:

"I can't bear it, Jim! I tell you I can't bear it. And what if it were my child? Could it be worse? Dare we risk all that?"

She had a memory of Jim's great strength and of all the things he did—and how the doctor turned to him and asked things and of Jim's calmness and readiness, and of one moment when he took a wailing Anna by the shoulders and sent her out of the room. Horatia did not wail. But her face was so white and so full of suffering that Jim kept close beside her ready for a collapse if it should come.

A fight for life is always terrible, but with a child, when the odds are so unequal, it is especially terrible. The doctor and nurse, quiet and coöperative, worked steadily together—hours passed—the cries from the tortured little body became fewer and at last the doctor, coming out into the upper hallway where Jim and Horatia sat together, said those words which have brought such floods of happiness to so many watchers, "He'll get through all right. In a week

he'll be as fit as ever. Great bit of luck that we caught it in time. In half an hour more he would have had convulsions and it's hard to get a baby well under those conditions."

Horatia was weeping silently.

"You've had a big strain, Miss Grant. Better get to bed. The nurse will be here all night and tomorrow I'll send someone to relieve her. In a day or two he won't need any watching; but while he is so weak it is just as well to give him expert nursing."

He was gone.

"Will you go to bed, now?" "

"I don't need to go to bed now," she answered, smiling through her tears. "I've strength enough for a lifetime."

"You're to go to bed at once," said Jim. "If you don't, you will lose your job on *The Journal*. Come, you can lock me out and then go to bed."

They told Anna about the boy's safety and Anna characteristically relapsed into a quick account of what she herself had gone through since he had begun to be sick. She admitted that she had given him a piece of mince pie and that he had liked it so well that she had let him have "another sliver."

"He was pestering me for it."

Horatia was past reproaches. She turned and went away, around the house with Jim, locking the windows and doors and turning off the lights. Coupled with her relief and happiness was a happiness in doing these domestic things with Jim

and a new closeness because they had been through suffering together. At the front door, he took her in his arms.

"I couldn't have borne it without you, Jim."

"We can bear anything-together."

Again that feeling that this might be repeated in their own life together—their own children might go down to the edge of death—suffering might come—but they would have each other. Life could not frighten them.

Then, as if everything had become as hard as possible to test her, and finding her brave under the test, was becoming kinder, the household burdens lightened. Jackie was well-so amazingly well that it was hard to believe that he ever had been sick-Ellen was better and came back to her work and the house slid into order and ease again. And more and more accustomed did Horatia become to the ways of a household and more and more normal did it seem to imagine herself in a household. She absorbed the touch of dogmatism natural to the competent woman who must dogmatize about her household. That was one of the unfortunate results of her adaptability and one bound to have grave consequences. All the things around her were real and true. They were made graver and deeper by the reflection of the things she had learned in the last six months but their truth was not altered. Children were beautiful, homes were beautiful, and love was the most beautiful and basic fact of all. The episode

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of Grace had become a dulled tragedy and she rarely thought of her previous life in their flat lest she resurrect what had been such an ugly climax to it.



CHAPTER XIII

PLEASE, Jim," begged Rose Hubbell, "you will come with me today?"

She was proposing a walk in the country and Jim was demurring. It was Sunday in May and a beautiful day of golden greens which he had longed to share with Horatia. But Horatia had gone to a family dinner party at Aunt Caroline's and refused to include him, because it was such a very family party "with antique aunts and uncles who'd watch us and speculate with the most indecent curiosity." He was bored but disinclined to see Rose Hubbell. If he could not be with Horatia, he could get pleasure out of the thought of her anyway. But Mrs. Hubbell insisted.

"Please, Jim, don't leave me alone today. It's a bad anniversary for me. Let's go for a long country walk and get all this sunshine. Will you?"

He remembered with a shock that it must be a bad anniversary for her. Just three years ago on just such a day, Jack Hubbell had shot the bottom out of his world. And hers too—and Jim's own, for a while. The bitter reminiscence awakened a keen pity in him for her. Yes, he would go. He promised, and half an hour later was on his way to meet her at the station. They

were to ride to the country and then start walking along the lake shore.

She was dressed simply and suitably in a short skirt and jacket and he saw at a glance that she had been weeping. Jim's gallantry was always greater than his cynicism, and though he had had ample proof that Rose had not let her husband's suicide blight her life, still this evidence of feeling on her part touched him and made him sorry for her and very kind. They rode along silently—she thoughtful and unwontedly sweet. He saw again in her the mood that had seemed such sweet spirituality and that had seemed to him to be her dominating mood when he had first known her. She was frail and her profile, turned to the light, was very wistful and drooped a little as it contemplated her past sorrows.

"Dear Jim," she said softly, "I was a wretch to make you share my depression today. But when this time comes around all the gayety with which I can surround myself at other times falls flat. I have all I can do to keep from—" her voice trailed into silence and she stretched her hands forward on her lap, clasping them tightly. Jim said nothing. He had had previous dealings with hysterical women and had learned not to add either the fuel of comfort or of contradiction to their self-musings. And she said nothing more.

They dismounted at their little station. It was only a station house with a country road leading away into light woods, and the road was one which they knew led to a high bluff overlooking

miles on miles of lake. Jim had often thought that he would like to bring Horatia here, but the place was too overclouded by certain memories.

"Do you remember the last time we were here?" she asked.

"Look here, Rose, I don't think this is a wise place to come today. Let's go back to town and go to supper some place. Or to a concert. This will only work you all up."

She refused by a gesture and then, seeming to realize a misstep, quickly changed her mood or at least her manner. She was gay. She saw all sorts of interesting things along the path. Her feet almost danced along and when they came into full sight of the lake, she stopped and flung out her arms with a gesture of joyous abandon, which even in its slight theatricalness was lovely to see. Langley adapted himself to her mood. They sat on a rock and flung stones into the water, and, being entirely human, Langley found himself appreciative of the way the wind could rumple her soft yellow hair without making it ugly or disorderly. An hour passed. It had been late afternoon when they reached the lake and the water was no longer dancing in the sunlight but grey and moving as if turned to severer purposes. Rose lay stretched on a rock, a slim delicate figure, exaggerated against its bareness.

"Are you in love with Horatia Grant?" she asked suddenly.

The question came unpleasantly to Jim. He

hesitated, unwilling to drag Horatia's name into a tête-à-tête with Rose and then answered, briefly—almost brusquely,

"Yes."

"Is she going to marry you?"

Mrs. Hubbell did not seem to be aware of his hesitation. She put the second question as directly as the first.

"Yes—we are going to be married. Come, Rose, it is late."

"She is lovely looking," contributed Mrs. Hubbell, contemplatively.

"I don't want to discuss her, Rose. It's—impossible."

She continued to lie there very quietly, non-resistant.

"Of course you don't want to discuss her. But you see it matters so much to me that I couldn't help asking."

How could one tread upon such meekness?

"Oh, nonsense, Rose. There's no reason on earth why you should feel that way. We decided long ago that there was no possible—emotion—between us. We continue to be good friends just as we always have been."

"I wish we could, Jim."

"Why can't we?"

"Because Horatia probably wouldn't want it."

"Of course Horatia would. Of course she would." But he repeated it as if not quite sure of himself.

And still Rose lay there, immobile, her delicate

arms outstretched, a perfect picture of resignation.

"The last link is snapping which binds me to the things which I loved. A wasted life—and yet not altogether my fault, was it? Just because we were friends—you and I—before that horrible thing happened. And then—you go—and I am alone—with nothing at all except a future that is as empty as—that hand." She lifted her lovely open hand to the wind.

"Don't be morbid, Rose."

"Oh, I'm not—not a bit," she assured him. "Of course I've always known you'd marry some time. I perhaps might have wished—indelicacies."

Langley was pacing up and down with embarrassment and his face showed mingled pity and anger, but she did not seem to see him.

"But you don't love me. There was a day when you thought you did. Do you remember that day when you had tea with me—a winter afternoon and the snow was coming down outside and it was so warm in the little yellow living-room—do you remember my little yellow living-room?—and you leaned down over me at the tea-table and kissed me—because you said you couldn't help it —just once?"

"Oh, damn it all, Rose—what's the sense in this? That nonsense was long ago. It was so damned foolish."

"It was nonsense," she answered quietly, "nonsense, I suppose, to you. Just a whim to you just as Jack's suicide was an impulse to him—and so for whims and impulses, I've wasted all my life."

He was suddenly kinder. Perhaps the appeal of that inert figure made him sorry for her just as anger on her part would have aroused every inch of him to masculine resentment. He sat down beside her.

"You mustn't talk like that, Rose. You're young, lovely. Of course you had a rotten deal, but you've everything in the world ahead of you yet and if you're brave you'll have it all coming to you."

"With a woman when love is gone or has become hopeless, everything is gone."

Subtle playing on the chords of man's vanity! Rose Hubbell had not developed her technique for nothing. Langley's softening and his discomfort showed in every line of his restless figure. And Rose sat up, to advantage, a little more tense.

"Jim, I want you to be happy above everything. And Horatia is wonderful and beautiful. Only don't let her absorb you. She is so strong—so much stronger than most women or men that she tends to absorb people. I feel myself shrinking into nothing beside her. I am only warning you as an old friend and a wise woman. A woman's greatest attraction to a man is a man's strength and she likes to be dominated—not to dominate."

Strange that Jim, who had avowed to Horatia that Mrs. Hubbell was possibly dangerous and who had himself so few illusions, should have been listening to her so seriously and so intently. She did not press the point but began to talk of Horatia—of her beauty, her grace, her mind, and Langley drank it all in. And the lake grew a darker grey as he bathed in the thoughts of the woman he loved and the woman who watched him saw that he was so far away from her that she grew heedless about her own expressions and let them grow a little more hard and bitter and angry. At last she jumped to her feet.

"Getting dark, Jimmy. We must go."

Jim rose. He had been having a delightful time for that last half hour and was ready to go—go back to Horatia.

"I'm glad you like her so much, Rose," he said gratefully and awkwardly.

"I admire her more than I can tell you," said Rose, "and if she would let me love her I would be happy indeed."

Langley did not answer that. He gave her his hand to help her over the rocks and they went down the deserted country road. In the last stretch before they came in sight of the station he felt her hand suddenly hot in his and as he turned she put her hands on his shoulders.

"Let me kiss you once, Jimmy boy," she asked, "just for good luck."

The name woke a host of memories in him which he would not have willingly called forth. He bent his head a little to her swift caress and then they went on, his mind back, uncontrollably back, in the past. He walked in reverie, and she

helped him a little in it. What they talked of now was those early days of her married life when Jim and Jack Hubbell had spent long evenings with her, the three of them in ardent conversation—or so it had seemed then to them. Skillfully Mrs. Hubbell recreated those past days, playing now on chords of sentiment, now on humorous notes, and Jim slid back into the past with her. On the train and on the way to her home she held up the conversation constantly, always maintaining the effect that she wanted of reviving a happy memory about to be relegated to the past forever. It was at her own door, when, after vainly urging him to come in, she gave him her hand in farewell and said:

"I wonder if I dare ask you something."

It may have been because he was so pleased at the happy turn she had given her melancholy, but in any case his smile was friendly and promising.

"I should almost think so."

"Don't just drop me cold, Jim. Let me see you sometimes. I don't think you have ever guessed how I need you. There's a black mood comes over me sometimes and you are the only person who can dispel it. I don't want to meddle—to interfere—to be anything—but don't hurt me by just dropping me cold. Come to see me now and then—once in a long while—only when Horatia doesn't want you—promise."

"Why—of course I will—of course, Rose—don't be so silly. You know that without a promise."

"No—promise—it will make me feel so much happier just to have the words to comfort me when I feel awfully outside and alone."

He hesitated, being a man and naturally reluctant to bind himself too tightly, and then, being a gentleman, he laughed and promised. She asked nothing more and took no advantage of his feeling but bent to open her door and then, waving to him from the dark threshold, was gone.

At his rooms, Jim found a note under his door. It was a little note written on a page out of a familiar notebook. "Where do you run to when I'can not find you? I have disposed of the stupidest party in the world because I can not bear my Sunday without the sight of you. I have brazenly rung your door-bell and there came no answer. If you get back, call me at Maud's to say good night and if it is early enough, come to see me and say it properly."

He looked at his watch. It was eleven o'clock—too late for a call. He sat down at his telephone and almost lovingly called the number of Maud's house.

"What were you doing?" asked Horatia. "All this heavenly afternoon?"

Langley did not make any attempt to evade the question.

"Oh, I went out in the country with Rose Hubbell. She was a bit down and needed to be cheered up, she thought."

"Oh."

A kind of blankness checked the warmth in Horatia's voice.

"Well, you must have had a nice time," she said. "It must have been lovely in the country. But I thought Rose didn't care for that sort of thing."

"Oh, once in a while she seems to. I'm sorry you had a dull dinner. And so awfully sorry that I missed you when you called. If I had dreamed that there was a chance that you might come in I wouldn't have stirred from the place."

"Oh, I'm glad you did," answered Horatia, resolutely trying to hide her hurt that he had been happy without her when she had longed so for him.

"Please talk to me a while, dear. You don't have to go to bed just yet."

"What did you do in the country?"

"Why, just walked and talked and longed for you."

"You're flattering me."

"Please don't say that, darling."

"I'm glad you missed me and I'm sorry I missed you. I'm so silly, Jim. I want you to have a good time and yet I want it to be had with me. Isn't that silly and disgustingly feminine?"

"It's most beautiful."

"Good night, Jim, dear."

The telephone clicked on the hook. Horatia turned to go up the stairs—but the smile on her lips did not match the look in her, eyes, that was not quite one of satisfaction.

CHAPTER XIV.

STILL Horatia stayed with her sister. It was not what she had planned to do after Maud's return, but there seemed no easy way of immediate escape and she shrank from the thought of taking another flat. Harvey and Maud were cordially insistent in urging her to stay with them. They told her that they needed her—that the children had become so used to her that they would be miserable without her. And Jim seemed inclined to think it better for her there during the heat of the summer. In the autumn, after they were married, they would have a place of their own. Until then—Maud's house offered all the comforts which would make the summer easy.

Work slackened a little. The office force took their vacations in due order but Horatia kept postponing hers, hating to leave Jim for even two weeks. And yet there was the faintest little cloud between her and Jim. Since the Sunday which he had spent with Mrs. Hubbell she had not felt quite so free with him as she had before—not quite so intimate. She did not want to discuss Rose Hubbell with him but she wanted to talk things out with him which concerned Rose. She felt the first peace of her engagement marred and was resolute in her determination to mar it

no further. He had never referred to that Sunday and she was shocked to find that her mind reverted to it fairly often. She found that she wanted to know every incident of every hour and that she was jealous of every minute that he had spent with Rose—that she wanted to share every mood and every hour with him. It made her slightly inquisitive as to what he did with his time. Jim never resented—never seemed to notice her questionings, but Horatia noticed herself sometimes—with a fierce sense of shame—prying into his movements.

"It is disgusting," she told herself, "but of course it isn't as though I was just plain jealous. It's really because I don't think Rose Hubbell is good for him. Even Kathleen Boyce insisted on telling me that."

She herself saw nothing much of Rose. Once they met by accident downtown and Horatia had to lunch with her and twice she declined invitations which included her and Jim. But Rose had little opportunity to get near Horatia when Horatia was intrenched behind the life at Maud's. When Horatia had free time, Maud had a way of absorbing it and Maud sometimes had a good deal to offer in the way of entertainment. She had somehow managed the acquaintanceship of Marjorie Clapp, who seemed pleasantly interested in Maud's entire household now that Horatia was living there. The Clapps week-ended at the cottage to which Horatia had gone once with Anthony, and Horatia spent a happy Saturday and

Sunday there with Mrs. Clapp. Anthony was not in evidence. His sister told Horatia that he had decided to go in with his father and that his father had sent him West for six weeks to get acquainted with the branches of the business.

It was as if a background were being given Horatia against which she must paint her life with Jim. The more she saw of these orderly people, the more impossible it seemed not to conform in part to their standards. One's mind, of course, would remain more free than Maud's and run deeper in its current than did Marjorie Clapp's. But there were surely unescapable necessities in any plan of life which she might arrange. Three meals a day and a servant and a certain amount of intercourse with pleasant people. She knew that there were people who did without the servant and took the three meals "out of the house," but she could never vision herself living as those people lived—without dignity and eternally in disorder. "More of Aunt Caroline is coming out in me every day," she complained to Jim. "As I plan for the fall my mind almost begins to run to West Park and a house with a stone dog."

Maud had a deft way of talking trousseau too. Whether she was trying to show Horatia certain impossibilities in life with Langley or whether her sister's availability for marriage brought out all the woman in her, Horatia could not decide. But Maud had a way of showing her trousseau linen and discussing ways of furnishing, and

though Horatia laughed her to scorn and said she would buy a dozen pequot sheets, half a dozen pillow cases and two table cloths and let it go at that, none the less the shimmer of damask and the alluring silks of window draperies insinuated themselves into her consciousness and made her yearn just a little sometimes for a little more ability to expand her own plans.

Not when she was with Jim. Then everything faded except the vast depths of life with him. She told Mrs. Clapp something about Jim—subtly enough as far as words go, if her eyes and the cadences of her voice had not been absolutely revealing. They talked about love.

"There's love—and love—and love," said Marjorie, "and each of us loves his or her own kind of love. I've known people who found greatest delight in giving up things for the people they care about. I've known others whose joy was in possession of the person loved—and there are people who love by sharing and having children and people who think that they are enough to one another in themselves and that children would be an interference and a hindrance. Some people want one thing and some another and some people want enduring things and some want the fun of transitory things. I've never been one of the people who like roses just because they are perishable. I'm all for things that last, myself, But I'm willing to admit the other kind of people.

"Peter and I," went on Marjorie, "just looked



at each other and saw babies—as the old women say-in each other's eyes. I don't mean that we married to have babies, you know. Not as crude as that. But that was the end of our love. We wanted to see each other in little new bodies and we wanted to make a home for the babies and to give them everything good and lovely. Because we loved each other. If we hadn't happened to meet each other we might have gone on forever without finding the right thing. I think there is a right thing, you know, a thing for everyone. Some people are born to be perpetually esthetic and some to keep the great tide of emotion flowing strong through the world-and some are meant to see babies and some to be good mental companions. The point is to find out what you are suited for and to carry out your own iob with the right person. I was lucky."

"Yes. And I'm going to be."

"It would be an outrage if you weren't," said the older woman admiringly.

She asked Jim out for the Sunday afternoon while Horatia was there, and he came, but curiously, the visit seemed to bring out a vein of cynicism in him that Horatia thought was permanently overlaid. He was brilliant in his talk and gayer than Horatia had ever seen him in anyone's company, but in spite of his gayety she felt in him criticism of everything he saw about him. He rallied Marjorie on having spread the "fleshpots of Egypt" before him, but he said it with a kind of laughing scorn that angered Horatia

though it made no apparent impression on Marjorie. And Horatia found herself a little hurt and chilled that he did not seem to appreciate the things which had been charming her so much.

"Poor Jim," said Marjorie astutely, to her husband, after their guests had left and they sat together on the dusky terrace, "so terribly in love with that girl and so awfully afraid that he won't be able to give her what she wants."

"Are you playing a game for Anthony?" asked

her husband.

"No—I'm not playing for Anthony. I'm playing for that girl. I'm not sure where she belongs. And it's tremendously important to get in the right niche these days. Maybe it is Jim—but it would be tragic if it weren't. And Anthony cares such a lot. He has never cared before and this is all in the right way. It's so hard to see——"

Meanwhile Horatia was probing Jim.

"They live—beautifully—and it all makes a wonderful harmony."

"So did nuns in cloisters."

"But they aren't cloistered."

"In a way. They are removed from all earthly trials and they go on the assumption that a thousand perfect individuals will be able to leaven the world. They won't. Nor ten thousand. The only thing that will leaven the world is the effort of millions of imperfect people."

"That's true," said Horatia, gravely.

He turned to her swiftly.

"Of course it's true, but it's not my criticism



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of them. My criticism of them is bred in jealousy. Because they have all the things actual and spiritual that lend to beauty. I want them for you and because I can't give them to you, I swagger around on my little dust heap and belittle their mountain."

CHAPTER XV

OSE HUBBELL was spending the hottest of the hot weeks at Christmas Lake. Christmas Lake was a summer resort—a hotel and its satellites, plunged in a forest of pines and then made extremely accessible to motorists by assiduous care of the roads. It was beautiful and gay -entirely protected from any rough contacts with weather, and an excellent golf course and tennis courts gave those who wanted exercise opportunity, while no stigma fell upon those who preferred to dress for tennis or golf without running any risk of soiling their clothes. A great many unattached, wealthy people moved lazily about the lawns, eating, drinking, watching, talking and finding the place entirely to their liking. So did Rose Hubbell. Just enough of her story was known to make her interesting and her prettiness and clever clothes added to the interest in her. She was skillful enough to be docile before the elder women and wise enough not to attempt to compete with the very young ones. And by choosing her rôle carefully she drew around her both young and old, the old pitying her and the younger ones admiring romance, as she incarnated it for them.

She kept up, as always, her desultory corre-

spondence with Langley. Her letters to him were idle, half-caressing, half-mocking, and with an occasional plaintive note. In late July she became rather unusually plaintive. Why didn't Jim come and rest a week at the Lake? She was bored and alone. He must be tired. She had a motor at her disposal and he knew what lovely drives there were around Christmas Lake. She wrote on, saying that if he wanted to come and bring Horatia or if Horatia wanted to come alone, she would play duenna gladly. And urged Horatia's coming further.

Jim usually pigeonholed Rose's letters until she had written three or four demanding an answer. Then he wrote very briefly. But he re-read this letter and laid it down beside him, and several times in the day he referred to it and sat thinking. Late in the afternoon he began an answer.

"Dear Rose—It would be very pleasant to bring Horatia to Christmas Lake and you have a way of making the place sound very cool and alluring. She undoubtedly needs a rest and there are some shadows under those pines that induce rest." He stopped and from his smile he must have been visioning Horatia in those blue shadows—with him, away from all her relatives and friends and the subtle hostilities to her lover—— He did no more work, but early in the evening went up the steps of the Williams house looking young and jubilant.

There were guests and it was half an hour before he could get Horatia by herself. They went out through Maud's tiny formal garden to a deep hammock and sat there. A million stars swung above them.

"I have a plan," said Jim. "Will you let me kidnap you for a couple of weeks? Bob can run the office for a little while and we could vacation together."

"You have only to throw me on your horse," said Horatia. "I'll be the most willing lady you ever kidnapped. But where shall we go?"

"Just to a very large, conventional resort—do you see? But one that all the money and non-sense and stupidity in the world hasn't spoiled—where there are lovely places to tell you how much I love you. To Christmas Lake."

"I've never been there. Everyone says that it's heavenly. But, Jim, isn't that where Rose Hubbell is?"

"That's one of the advantages," said Jim, eagerly, and yet there was a little damper on his eagerness even as he spoke. "She would be a sort of chaperon—only we wouldn't have to bother about her too much."

"I see—did she suggest it?"

Jim began to fumble a little.

"She sort of—gave me the idea."

Horatia was silent for a minute. She felt on dangerous ground and full of a kind of protective pity for this lover of hers who seemed so oddly unable to see the ridiculousness of what he proposed.



"Jim, do you remember telling me once that Rose Hubbell was dangerous?"

THIS MARRYING

"I remember that I did, but I don't feel quite that way about it now. Rose likes you very much, you see—and she knows how I feel."

This time there was real hurt in Horatia's tone.

"You told her—that?"

He tried to recoup. "Only as much as your sister knows and your aunt."

Horatia remained cruelly silent. When she spoke again her words reverted to the subject in hand, but her tone was far more distant than they justified.

"I don't think Christmas Lake is quite practicable."

Jim showed his hurt as his plans crashed to the ground.

"Just as you say, dear. I only suggested it because I was silly enough to think we might play around together there a lot and have a real rest."

"But surely you don't expect me to go under Rose Hubbell's chaperonage, Jim. Why, think, Jim—dozens of people know her whole history and—— Think how impossible it would be for me."

"I didn't count on seeing much of her, you see," said poor Jim, trying to defend not Rose Hubbell, but his own care and protection of Horatia. "And she would have been just a nominal chaperon. But I see that I was a fool. Just consider the suggestion cancelled, will you, darling? Put it out of your head absolutely."

He drew her close to him and may have been simple enough to fancy his request had been But thoughts were spinning madly granted. around in Horatia's head. This outrageously silly plan of Jim's seemed to clinch the whole matter of Rose Hubbell. If Rose could make him believe that such an arrangement was all rightthat it was all right to take the girl he was going to marry away under the chaperonage of a woman about whom he had been the co-respondent in a divorce suit, she could make him believe black was white. She felt older than Jim for onceresponsible for him. With an instinctive feminine reaction she refused to blame the man. It was a matter between her and Mrs. Hubbell.

"Jim," she said softly, "don't you think the time has come for you to give up Rose Hubbell?"

Jim started. "How on earth could I give her up? She's nothing to me, Horatia. Child, you surely don't dream——"

The word "child" offended Horatia.

"No—of course I don't think you are in love with her—or anything like that. But I think she thinks she has a hold on you and that she intends to play it for what it's worth. She has a little proprietary air—and I think she has an influence over you which you don't realize and that for your good you shouldn't see her any more at all."

The youth of Horatia, hurling such statements at any man and worst of all at the man who wished to be especially fine and strong in her eyes! She went on, a little flurried and feeling her way.

"Truly, I'm not jealous. I know you love me and I know that you're not flirting. But I don't like to see that woman hang around you because she has absolutely nothing to give you. From your own admission you see her because you feel you have a duty towards her and that is no reason at all. She is well able to look out for herself."

"So am I, sweetheart." That was the man in

Horatia did not agree.

"Let's not quarrel about Rose Hubbell, please, darling," he went on. "I don't give a copper what becomes of her. But she is an old acquaintance and a perfectly harmless one. If you don't like her you'll never have to see her again."

"And would you go on seeing her?"

"Why, no, darling—not unless I couldn't help it. I can't go around the block to avoid her—or cut her on the street."

The slight impatience in his tone found immediate reflection in Horatia's answer.

"Don't be silly, Jim. I'm not unreasonable or going to be unreasonable. But I want to know where you stand with her and then we will drop it." She was pressing the point now partly because her pride wouldn't let her admit that she was being unreasonable or foolish and partly from sheer womanly desire to break down the resistance in her lover. And because she felt very near to tears her voice was hard and her figure tightened. Jim took it as a repulse, but he became more serious.

"What is it you want, Horatia?"

"I want you to drop Rose Hubbell. Not go to see her. Tell her if necessary that you are dropping her. It wouldn't hurt her very much. Of course I don't mean that you're not to speak to her, but don't ask her to dance when you are out places—don't let her write to you. I want you to promise me."

The tears showed in her voice now and who knows what Jim would not have been ready to promise if the word had not called out the memory of a promise given just a few weeks before to Rose. She had pleaded just not to be dropped. He had a clear memory of the whole conversation with her.

"Will you?" asked Horatia. "Truly it's awfully hard to ask you. Won't you promise just that?"

She felt like a child begging for a favor and like a woman to whom refusal would be outrage.

"Will it satisfy you, dear, if I promise to bear all this in mind and never to offend you again?"

The reservation puzzled Horatia and piqued her.

"Why won't you promise outright?"

"Frankly, dear, I can't. I can't give a promise like that. It might be impossible to keep it without wounding Rose terribly."

Horatia felt that she was wounded terribly. She turned her head away.

"Please," begged Langley, "this is dreadful,

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Horatia. Can't you trust my love for you and forget it?"

Horatia was weeping frankly now. He tried to take her in his arms but she drew away.

"Go away, Jim. Go home now. I want to think."

"Let me sit here quietly while you think."

"Please go-please."

He took her hands and buried his face in them for a moment, his lips against the soft palms. Then he went down the path and through the garden gate.

CHAPTER XVI

NO Horatia the affair was immensely serious, but Langley's attitude in The Journal office the next morning, though anxious, was not yet gravely troubled. According to reason he should have been right, what had jarred between him and Horatia was nothing after all, but in fact it was Horatia who gauged the dangers of the situation correctly. What she herself did not realize was that the episode about Mrs. Hubbell was one which only added another fear and another doubt to the fears and doubts which already had invaded her mind, unacknowledged. these fears and doubts were in the air of her generation. Her discovery about Grace had perhaps begun the uncertainty. Tricked once into belief in a person and deceived, she herself had learned to feel suspicion and fear. She had learned that the men about her were not necessarily faithful to their wives and try as she would to put the thought out of her mind it crept back sometimes while she was talking to this man or that. Langley had reassured her—had made her smile again -events had driven the memory of Grace out of her mind—but the stain remained, corroding the faith and beauty of her feeling for Jim more than she guessed. There had been the doubts created by her fears about money matters and as to

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whether she and Jim would be able to keep themselves orderly and happy on their income. There had been the fear of the pain of marriage as she hovered at the door of the little sick child in her sister's house. These things once accepted as the lot of woman became a problem now that they were a choice and not a lot. Subtly too, the temptations of the luxury of the life of the married women whom she met around Mrs. Clapp had dulled the edge of her own desire to work after she married. And Horatia had found no anchor philosophical or sociological. She was one of those who drifted with people rather than with causes and it was a hard age into which she had come to maturity. She could not like so many contemporary women fling herself into a cause and put the cause (or pretend to put it) before all personal life, and yet she could not, like her grandmother, fling herself into the institution of matrimony and expect the institution to solve her problems. Her faith in marriage with Jim was a structure subtly undermined by the conditions surrounding her and upheld only by one great and mighty prop—the prop of faith in Jim. Jim would adjust the problem of how they should live -Iim would keep them from stupidity and shabbiness—against the furtiveness of the married scoundrel who sought illicit relations, Jim stood, magnificent in his love for her. Everywhere he supported her, held her up, made her strong. And then this had come, this little thing which had curiously grown into a big thing.

was not that she feared Rose Hubbell as a rival. In that she was quite honest. But she feared Jim. She feared herself if Jim should seem weak, if he should appear to be the tool of a woman, if he could be the prey of a conscienceless woman. What sort of weakness was it to which she was looking for strength? The more she thought about it the more reasonable her position seemed to her. There that dangerous touch of feminine dogmatism absorbed at Maud's came into play. She was asking him to give up a meaningless relationship, to trust in her judgment, to fulfill her desire. If he would not sacrifice a thing which was worthless, if he would not trust her judgment, if he would not fulfill her desire, either he had not been honest in telling of the whole relationship between him and Rose Hubbell or he was a lover whose love was only skin deep. such a preposterous pitch of unconscious arrogance had her feelings brought her. Those were sad days for Horatia. She struggled for a week. while it grew steadily more hot in the city. Frantically her mind circled on itself, seeking rest and peace. There were times when it seemed that to turn to Jim and bury her head on his shoulder would solve everything. But when she did that, as she sometimes did, she found that it solved nothing—that she always began again on her endless round of argument.

There came a day when she and Jim, sitting opposite each other in his office after the rest had gone home, faced decision.

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"You'll wear out, Horatia. I can't bear this. Won't you please let the matter drop?"

"It doesn't drop me," said poor Horatia. "It goes on to mount up to the big question of whether you love me at all when you can let me suffer so."

"It's bigger than this affair," said Jim, "you're right. If it were a question of that promise only. perhaps I could find a way to make it even if it involved abandoning a trust. But the thing is bigger. You ask me to promise you something for which you'd despise me if I agreed." She began to protest, but he shook his head. "Not now, but ultimately. You ask me to promise because you don't trust me. If I gave that promise I'd be less a man and you less a woman for forcing it. You see, dear, I don't quite satisfy you or make you confident. This promise would help things for a bit. Then you'd find another difficulty in my nature—another flaw to make you doubt and perhaps you'd want to bind that too with promises. Rose Hubbell is no more to me than that blotter. But I am something to myself in my relation to Rose Hubbell as well as to the newsboy on the corner. And I must decide those relationships myself because I am a man. If you want this promise it's because you fear the strength of my manhood-and that's basic."

He was so much older, so much wiser than the Horatia who, tired and pale, hardly heeded his talk. "Oh, I'm frightened," she cried, "all this arguing! If this happened afterwards—"

"I'd become a brute or you a shrew," said

Langley.

But what she had wanted was his denial that it would ever happen again.

"I'm afraid of you. You are hard and un-

yielding. You don't bring me--"

"I don't bring you rest or comfort," he said bitterly. "But, my God, how I long to, Horatia. Only I love you too much to bring you false rest or comfort or to drug you with words. I too have come to fear myself. What have I to give you——"

They sat drearily fatigued, the paper-strewn

table between them.

Horatia made no protest; she was or thought she was full of questioning herself. Yet what came next brought about in three breaths a vast surprise; one moment what Langley was saying sounded like a natural sequence, and the next all the values of life shifted, and they faced each other in a new, strange, graceless world.

"I want you to go away for a rest," said Jim. "Go away and forget all this. Then if you never want to come back to me, it's all right. But if you should, Horatia, I'll be here—I'll always be here—always waiting, always thankful for what you've done for me—what you've given me, and always knowing that it was far, far more than I deserved."

It was youth, inexperienced girlhood that dis-



regarded the magnificence of that appeal. Horatia was primitive, green enough to want to be overcome—to want to be forced into surrender. That he did not force her but left her path open seemed weakness—and something like coldness. An older woman would have known that it was strength and rare devotion.

She was silent and in a turmoil within.

"Then you'll give me up?" she asked at last, evenly enough.

"I'll never give you up, but I'll never imprison you."

"It all is the same." Horatia spoke out of a weary effort to keep dignity, not to break down before the indifference of her lover.

The languor that was all he could have heard in her voice was hard on him. Langley put his head on his hands and hid the agony in his face.

"I told you once that you loved the romance you found in me," he said without resentment. "Well, I've destroyed the romance. I'm just ordinary, cheap, uninspiring. But I'm not going to make you ordinary or cheap. There's so much romance left for you to find."

She stood up and struck her hands together angrily.

"Don't mock at me."

"For God's sake, Horatia, I wasn't mocking."

"Let me go—I will go now. I'll go—on my vacation."

"Your vacation?"

"We'll call it that. I'll go for a month—two

months. And if I can come back, I'll come. But I'm afraid."

"My darling—my darling—if you can't, you are to find happiness more worthily."

He took her in his arms hungrily, sacrificially. That should have told her. But she was hungering for prohibitions, for demands upon her. There was no warmth in her, and he let her go.

At the door she lingered.

"Can you get someone to fill my place?"

"Yes-don't worry about that. Just rest."

"I've been happy here."

"You've brought life with you."

The door closed after her. She went down the staircase slowly, miserably.

Langley's face was grey and old.

CHAPTER XVII

HE blue of the lake had faded into grey—a grey that looked thick and heavy and that lay impassive under the blasting sunlight. coolness was gone and its vigor. Above, in The Journal office, where the shades were drawn down to keep out the heat, the vigor seemed gone too. The machinery went on smoothly enough. Horatia's desk a young woman, fresh from a New York school of journalism, was typing an excellent article on what suffrage had done in the recent campaign. At the surrounding desks the reporters struck off brief histories of automobile accidents, police raids, city happenings. In Langley's room, the pale little stenographer took dictation as he walked up and down and worked out There were editorials on the his editorials. street car franchise, that hardy perennial in city problems, on the new appointment of the city planning commission, on the latest foreign tangle, on the eternal disentangling of the knot of political complications at Washington. Clearcut and well-phrased, his words came on each subject, so that the stenographer hurried to keep up with the flow of his thought, and yet something intangible had gone out of his thinking as out of the office atmosphere. The office was no longer a place of romance—an adventure—a laboratory in which to solve world problems—a crusade against corruption as it had been for the past six months. It was a work-shop, a clean, orderly work-shop—and that was all. They all missed Horatia. During the first week of her absence Bob Brotherton had a maddening way of calling constant attention to it and bewailing it. He needed her for this and for that and he said facetiously that there was no use in sprucing himself up any more. No one cared for him and he would wear old clothes until she came back.

Iim had not realized how much Horatia meant to the staff. His own devotion to her had been so absorbing that he had not noticed the relations of the others. Now a stream of comments about her seemed to be floating about the office all day long. To excuse her outrageously long and indefinite vacation he had been compelled to say that she was not well and the staff felt a shadow over them. They were forever finding things in the day's work which would have amused Horatia, forever recalling this or that incident which had amused her, forever wishing she were back. Langley alone did not comment on her, but Bob would say wisely when a particularly caustic comment came out of the inner office, "He's not himself. He misses the young lady. He's a different man when she's around."

With a great deal of wisdom he did not make that remark openly to Langley.

The Journal was prospering more and more.



It was no longer a paper to apologize for or worry about. It was getting a very substantial circulation and more and more advertisers. Jim realized that this success was due not only to the paper itself, but also to the fact that there was coming to be a place for a clean paper in the city—that more and more people liked their news straight and unadulterated and wanted to read comment on the news with which they did not necessarily a priori agree. He was stopped more and more often by old friends and urged to come to the "house"; more and more often he found himself deferred to in political discussions at the club as the judgment of last appeal. He liked it all and he improved under it. He kept up scrupulously after Horatia had gone as if to show her that he would not let her work be wasted. Yet there was a change in him and in the quality of his vigor. He was a man working for a principle and not an object, whereas before he had been working for a principle and Horatia. The eagerness had gone out of his eyes. Sometimes after the office was empty he would go into the outer office and sitting at Horatia's desk write her letters—letters which left him sometimes pale and exhausted and sometimes set and stern. But he had one invariable habit. He tore the completed ink-written papers into tiny pieces and stuffed them into the wastebasket before he left the office and went home. There was also often a curious look on his face as he looked over his mail, and sometimes he would lay an envelope carefully aside until

everything else had been attended to and then fall upon it as if he were famished. The envelopes were rather more frequently present at first than later after Horatia had left town.

In the hurt anger of her vacation's first twelve hours she had quite decided not to write to him at all. During the second twenty-four hours she wrote ten letters and mailed one brief little note saving that she was sorry if she had hurt him and that she wanted above all things not to hurt his work or affect The Journal, stated where several of her copy sheets had been left and urged him to take a vacation himself and get a genuine rest. She ended by saying that Maud wanted her to go with them to a country place near Lake Habitat and that she thought she probably would go. Jim looked a little grim at that because Lake Habitat was where the Wentworth cottage was and he knew Maud. But he read on to her conclusion, a conclusion so honest, so sweet and so suffering that the tears came into his eyes.

"It's so hard, Jim. I feel empty and faint and I try to move about but I seem like waxwork. Everything seems awfully mixed up in me. Nothing in the world matters except you and yet we mustn't fling ourselves blindly into sentimental fervors if we really don't belong together in every way. I can't write. Good-night—and God bless you."

That was the last letter of such a kind that Jim received. The next one was merely a note telling him that she was surely going with her sister and



giving her address in case her successor on The Journal or Jim, himself, should need her. It was a much more controlled note and of course Jim did not know that it, like its predecessor, had been written after much vain effort and tearing up of letter paper. There had been a day when Horatia, who had been shopping in town alone, had almost gone to The Journal office. She hesitated and trying to gather resolution went into a tea room and ordered some iced drink. The room was crowded and another woman coming in sat down opposite her before they looked at each other. It was Grace Walsh. With no change of color Grace rose, but Horatia put out a detaining hand.

"Don't move—please."

"I'd like to stay if you don't mind," said Grace sincerely. "There are one or two things I didn't write you. My new companion in the flat is quite anxious to stay on there. I suggested that you'd be undoubtedly willing to sublet."

"Gladly."

"Are you still with your sister?"

"Yes—I'm going to the country with her tomorrow."

"It's your vacation, I suppose?"

It was very hard to dissemble before those calm, disillusioning, serious eyes of Grace.

"A kind of vacation," said Horatia, a little heavily.

A strange look came over Grace's face—a look of anger, the look which a mother has when her child is ill-treated.

"You've been suffering." Without any ado of conscious readjustments they passed from an attitude of armed neutrality to a disarmed, a benevolent neutrality.

"Yes."

"Some man—some damned man—no, don't tell me—poor little Horatia—won't you believe me when I tell you none of them is worth it? I wish to heaven that women would stop letting themselves suffer. They've borne the emotional burdens long enough. Why shouldn't we take men as they take us—as part of the day's work? Look here, Horatia, you're worth any ten men I ever saw. Don't let them wear you down."

"I'm not."

"You look frazzled."

"I thought you liked men," said Horatia, irrelevantly, "and disliked women."

"I like men and I like women when they are individuals—but women in relation to men are usually unspeakable—and men in relation to women are vile. We need to stand alone, Horatia—to shake things off. To feel—and to know when to stop feeling."

"To stop feeling," repeated Horatia.

Grace leaned over and put her hand on the other girl's.

"It's hard—but it can be done," she said and there was almost a mesmeric quality in her sure, slow voice.

"I think we do need to learn that," agreed Horatia.



She rose to go.

"Some time when I'm a lot bigger and better and more controlled and not so cheap, I want to talk with you, Grace," she said; "I know you're right in lots of things but the addition of your ideas is wrong. The grand total of your philosophy is wrong. It's got to be wrong. I won't have it right. But we do need to learn to stop feeling."

Grace's look followed her with a queer yearning in it—her eyes seemed to say that she had not finished all she wanted to say.

Horatia went out to the street. The incoherent conversation had checked her desire to see Langley. It had given her a cue. She would stop feeling. Instead of to *The Journal* office she went to a large shop and tried on hats before a many-sided mirror and was surprised to find herself succeeding in her deliberate mental effort to get her mind away from its pain. The hats interested her. Each one appeared to change her character and she began to speculate on how she would like to change her type during the summer with Maud and the Clapps and Wentworths. The saleswoman brought her the kind of hats she usually ordered—large sailors—plain wing-trimmed shapes, but Horatia laid them aside.

"That is the girl I am escaping from," she said to herself, removing a straight-brimmed gray sailor, and she pointed to one on a model. It was of plain soft yellow chiffon and drooped a little about her face. Under it she looked provocative, as if deliberately intending to charm.

She had never tried on such a hat before and she lingered before her image in the mirror while the saleswoman poured out tributes.

"I'll take it," she said, and proceeded with unparalleled extravagance to choose two more, one of black with soft waving feathers and one of rose felt that crushed itself into different shapes on her head. Then, urged by the saleswoman, who was gathering momentum, she bought a rose sweater to wear with the rose hat, drew a check that half appalled and half amused her and went home to Maud. Maud. receiving three hat boxes next morning, was amazed and delighted. dently Horatia intended to play the game. She pressed a yellow frock on Horatia which she insisted was necessary to the well being of the yellow hat and mourned because she herself could not wear yellow. Horatia was very gay. She pirouetted in her hats before Harvey and to her amazement found that she was shaking off her worries and her unhappiness. She wanted to go to the country place and be still more happy. She insisted that unless they made it decently gay there she wasn't going to stay. And while Harvey chuckled and Maud opened her eyes she danced upstairs to her room, closed the door, flung the yellow hat in the corner and wept into Maud's Madeira counterpane, suddenly intolerably homesick for nothing in the world so much



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as her typewriter in *The Journal* office, the twinkle of the lake under her window and the sound of Jim's voice in the next room, giving orders, telephoning, dictating.

CHAPTER XVIII

NTHONY'S sister stood in her cool country living room, arranging her flowers. There were a mass of them that she had brought in from the rough-and-tumble garden by the cottage wall-hollyhocks, tall and pink and already in their place in a green vase against the wallcerise cinnamon phlox, filling the air with their vivid fragrance, a riot of nasturtiums of all colors, sweet peas whose pastel lavenders and pinks were spoiled until Marjorie put them in a glass basket before a little mirror, poppies, and deep orange African marigolds. Mariorie separated them from each other and then reassembled them. mixing in now bachelors' buttons with marigolds, and baby's breath with poppies. She was quite absorbed and her brother, lying on a cushion-piled settle, watched her admiringly and for a few moments silently. When he spoke he seemed to be taking up an interrupted conversation.

"You're sure she is coming then?"

"Mrs. Williams told me so in town yesterday."

"And you think that the skillful Maud was trying to hint that it was off between Horatia and Jim Langley?"

"She had a saddened and romantic air about Horatia. I don't know exactly what she was try-



ing to imply. But from a rather steady stream of inquiries as to your whereabouts I was inclined to have vulgar suspicions that she was really interested in you and your movements. And then she said, 'I suppose you know how it is, Mrs. Clapp, when these young things turn to you with their romantic difficulties.' And then she giggled. How that remarkable young woman can giggle!" finished Marjorie.

Anthony sat puzzling.

"Of course Horatia doesn't tell her a thing." he said. "but that sort of woman is astute as the devil in some ways. Well, if she comes down here, Langley or no Langley, I'm going to go after her. If she wanted to marry Langley badly enough she has had time enough to make sure by this time. But it's ridiculous to think of her wasting her time on one of these awfully complicated intellectual emotional affairs if it's not going to come to anything. If she doesn't want me she can tell me again-stronger-to get to hell outand I'll get. But I'm going to get the thing settled. I thought maybe I'd get over it when I I didn't see a girl while I was out got West. there who seemed real at all. And I'd catch myself mooning. It's unhealthy. It's got to be stopped."

"You want to remember," said Marjorie, "that Horatia has had a hard summer and that she will be tired. Don't rush her too hard or she'll go to pieces or send you packing from sheer weariness."

"I don't mean to tire her. I want to rest her." There was a strange mixture of protectiveness and sullenness in Anthony's tone.

"It's all nonsense anyway," he went on, "to think of her wearing herself out in that miserable office. Girls oughtn't to be allowed to knock themselves to pieces that way. Where it's necessary it's bad enough but when a girl——"

"Has only to sit back and let you support her,"

laughed Marjorie.

"When a girl is like Horatia she's altogether too valuable to throw herself away for some fetish like earning a living. You know exactly what I mean and you agree with me too, Marge."

"It all depends on how much you can make

her care for you."

"I could make her care from sheer force of imitation if I could get this Langley stuff out of her head."

"Granted. But if she does happen to be in love with Langley?"

"He's no person for her to marry."

"You can't do it by dogma, my dear."

Anthony shook himself like an impatient puppy.

"Well, I'll be damned if I don't find some way

to do it."

"Love is queer," reflected Marjorie, "in its effect on people. Now you show it principally by a marked increase in profanity."

Anthony grinned and left her.

The cottage stood well back from a road which

wound itself around a series of lakes and up steep hills into a district which was almost mountainous. Anthony knew every foot of the country and loved it as well as his cottage which had been the scene of so many pleasant parties, both his own and Marjorie's. It was the place above all which he would have chosen for this biggest adventure of his life. The place which Maud had taken was a few miles farther up the road but within easy distance. There was every reason for Anthony's contemplative smile as he swung down the wooded road.

The Williams party arrived a few days later with some bustle. It was Maud's first venture into country residences and though it was on a small scale it appealed to her immensely. Only her sudden acquaintance with Marjorie Clapp had given her courage for the move, for the district in the hills was a refuge for a society somewhat older and better acquainted than Maud's town crowd. She and Harvey had taken the children away for the summer once before, but going to a summer hotel was a different and incomparably insignificant thing beside the pride of belonging to a genuine summer colony. She had asked Mrs. Clapp a little diffidently about places in the hills and Mrs. Clapp had been unexpectedly helpful—even giving her the name of a special cottage which could probably be rented. An unpretentious little cottage enough but pleasant to Maud because the Hilltons, the Straights, the Clapps and the Morrises wore their ginghams and sun hats within a radius of ten miles, pleasant to Jackie because he had been promised a rabbit, pleasant to Harvey on account of a neighboring trout stream, and pleasant to Horatia because the woods around it offered refuges and solace.

Harvey took them up in the new stream line touring car which was the outward sign of his increasing prosperity, and while Maud watched a road map to be sure that Harvey would not miss the road which went by the Country Club which the summer-people had built. Horatia sat with her arm around a weary little Jack, breathing in the freshness of the woods with their summer scents and thinking. She felt very old and disappointed and disillusioned, and she thought with envy of the first time she had driven over this road with Anthony in the winter, feeling so happy and full of love for Jim. Maud poured out a steady stream of comment and conjecture—and Horatia hardly listened, knowing that expression and not attention was what Maud sought. She had never liked her sister so well as she had during these past days. Maud had let her alone and asked no ques-She seemed to be waking into a kind of appreciation of Horatia's feelings and Horatia was very grateful, entirely ignorant as she was of Maud's unrelinquished plans about Anthony. Horatia had just thought of Anthony for the first time in weeks. She had thought of him as the man who had driven the car when she had gone through these places thinking of Jim, and first rejoicing in the happiness of love.



They reached their cottage and Maud was soon unpacking and opening the house while the cook, imported lest life in the country become too strenuous, began to prepare dinner. Horatia, bravely attired in her rose sweater and hat, started out for a walk. She wanted to adjust her thoughts and get perfectly calm, for she meant to be a gay companion and not a doleful one.

Little leaf-covered paths wandered into the woods here and there. She turned at random into them and went along, anxious to lose her loneliness in the greater loneliness and friendliness of the forest. And here, for the first time, she succeeded. The trees were motionless in the still afternoon. Their branches curved and interlocked and made great, cool, dark green shadows. The ferns stirred as she passed and she heard the lazy chirping of some birds. It was deep and still and calm and sure, so that in the midst of it Horatia became calm and sure for a moment. She felt her ache for Jim's presence pass, and for the first time since she had gone from him there came a feeling that she was back where she belonged. For the first time she felt awakened pleasure and she stood very still, almost afraid to stir lest the peace that was filling her should change to misery again. After a little she went on. She did not want to go back to the cottage yet. Later she would be ready for them but as yet she was ready only for herself.

And so Anthony came upon her—a bright bit of color in the midst of the woods with her eyes

shining with peace. At the sight of her he felt the flush of his own face. It was all very well to be full of bravado before Marjorie but in the presence of Horatia his confidence waned. Yet she was clearly glad to see him.

"I heard you were West."

"I came back last week and heard that your sister had taken the Warner cottage. I was hoping you'd come out with her. Every month seems the best out here but this one is especially nice. And there are wonderful places to walk and ride. We have a swimming place and a very poor tennis court——"

"I don't think I shall like the tennis court half as well as just this. I like your woods."

"So do I," answered Anthony with happy sympathy. "Let me show you a finer place than this though. Deeper in."

They went on until they came to a little clearing like a great room with the trees interlocked above it. Along one side ran a tiny clear stream.

"But this is too perfect. This isn't natural."

"This is my room. I made it myself and furnished it by opening up the stream. The bed was there for it but the water had been choked by a dam of leaves. I cleared it out and now you see I have running water in my room. That's all I need."

"It's the most beautiful interior decoration I ever saw."

"You shall have a key for that."

He did not keep her. But he walked towards



his sister's cottage and they came out in her garden. Horatia went into the house to see Marjorie and the children. She felt curiously at home there, and Marjorie was so very glad to see her that Horatia felt even more happy. She thought suddenly that she could tell Marjorie a little about Jim, and that Marjorie was the only person in the world to whom she could tell even a little. But there was little time to think. Everyone wanted to plan things to do and to arrange for many Then Anthony insisted that he had walked her unconscionably far and to save her stiffness he must take her home. She got into the car with delightful familiarity. Anthony said never a personal word and if he thought them, Horatia did not guess. She found him very handsome in his country khaki and even more wholesome than ever. She was in a mood to yearn for wholesomeness.

Maud would have Anthony stay for dinner. Horatia found herself urging him too and to her greater surprise found herself thoroughly anticipating dinner. She had not been hungry for some time but tonight—

"I've never seen Horatia eat so much," said Anthony, "except on a memorable evening at the Redtop Hotel."

Banter and nonsense—healthy nonsense. How restful they were after introspection and worry. How friendly and cheerful everyone was, and how quiet and peaceful it was about them. Maud watched Anthony as she crocheted a sweater for

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herself-Anthony watched Horatia - Har with a secret amusement watched his wife and sister-in-law, but Horatia watched no one. was revelling in peace. Jim was in her mind no longer torturing her. She thought of him loving her and of herself as loving him. solutions of her difficulty came to her and she not look for any. She was content to be in midst of life. It no longer frightened her.

"Good-night," said Anthony. "I'll be o often. Look for me on the doorstep every mo ing."



CHAPTER XIX

PERHAPS the modern substitute for the coquetry of the old-fashioned woman before marriage is the introduction of "problems" into her love-making. The man still courts—a little more discreetly than he used to but much after the same plan—but whereas the woman of a generation ago was supposed to lead him a whimsical chase, now giving, now withdrawing her favor, refusing to admit her feelings, the typical woman of today is apt to admit her feelings readily enough, but she preludes her submission to them by the introduction of a host of "problems."

Sometimes it is the problem of whether she wants to have children or not—sometimes the question of giving up a separate, wage-earning existence, sometimes a theory against the inequality of marital concessions, sometimes this, sometimes that. But questions of this sort have become such common experience that one wonders sometimes if the whole thing is not a development of the old feminine practice of playing with a man from behind a feather-fringed fan. Not that these women of today consciously concoct their problems to trouble their lovers or excite further ardor in them—far be it from the thoughts of most of them to so illegitimately fan a man's

flame, and perhaps the whole suggestion is unworthy and unfair. Still, so many girls have these preliminary problems before they marry—so many courtships are painful, harassed affairs these days—so many moonlit nights are spent in putting questions which do not read, "Will you love me always?" but "Will I be able to maintain my individuality?" or in the bewildering phrase of poor Lady Harmon, "my autonomy," that this dwelling upon mating problems among women surely looks like a modern group movement. And no reflection either on the honesty or fervor of contemporary women. The same doubts stirring in their minds have always stirred in the minds of courted women—doubts as to whether such happiness, such devoted love as comes in the first fragrant period of love-making can endure and what will happen if it does not endure? Formerly women teased their lovers for assurances of perpetual love. The woman now, more wise. more honest, more skeptical too, about perpetual love, puts a different face on her questions. She asks—"And if this love does not turn out well, what then? Shall I be wrecked? Can I maintain enough of my independence, of my beauty and strength, to play the game through? Will this man be grasping and demanding? Is love an exhilaration worthy of the submission of my body and spirit?"

The woman of today is not miserly. She has no idea—not nearly so much as her old-fashioned sister of doling out her love. She is a marvelous

spender. But she is not a spendthrift and she has had enough teaching in the economics of life to demand value received. If love is worth while she is capable of giving everything magnificently. If it is not, she grudges giving, having put permanently behind her the theory that woman's lot is pitiful and one of resignation. And yet sometimes she does give everything, knowing it is a gamble, just as the girl of the old game gave everything often enough, even when her lover's "love you always" rang false in her ears.

Horatia's problem, of course, might have been one of a dozen. The incident of Mrs. Hubbell was analyzed rightly enough by Jim as being merely illustrative of a lack of faith in him. She had neither complete faith in him nor complete faith in marriage and her lack of faith was entirely in consonance with her time. Mrs. Hubbell loomed large in her mind while she was in the midst of her argument with Jim. But she was not in the country for a week before she thought of her problem in terms which almost eliminated Rose.

In the first flush of her love for Jim she had yielded to her temperamental love for romance and to emotional wonder at finding herself beloved and suddenly more important than ever before. But with the approach of the great question of marriage she had found that her mind began to question many things. She soon saw that what she was facing was not a minor point of whether Jim was to see Rose Hubbell or not, but

whether her need of Jim and his of her was great enough to supersede all doubts, all fears, all worries about marriage. Little by little she postponed a final consideration of these questions. Life in the country was easy enough but none the less full of events. There was a great deal of lazy intercourse with people, a great deal of exercise, motoring-and Horatia found that she was able to give herself up quite happily to the enjoyment of natural beauty-fresh morning air, sunsets on the little lake and green afternoons in the woods. She was not ashamed of that. sensations of beauty and the elevation of spirit that came with it were so far from trivial that they justified her for feeling happy so soon after her break with Jim. She withdrew a little from the memories of his love into contemplation of the fact of it.

At this distance it was peaceful to think of his love and in this calmer mood she did not question the depth of feeling of either of them. The questions of outcomes she laid aside for the present and she moved through this setting of natural beauty with heart and head held high. Some time she would move to a solution—not yet. Of course she did not realize how dangerous to her love for Jim all these distractions were nor how dangerous her friends meant them to be. She never thought of Anthony as a lover. A false step from him or Maud would have driven her away in those first days, but Anthony's attitude was perfect. He was the admirable friend and companion just as



Horatia had wished and just as she had asked him to be. He established her confidence in him again. They walked and rode and swam together. No excursion was complete without Anthony.

And they grew very close to one another. There was one silver night when they rode for endless hours under the moonlight—a white road stretching forward over the hill-tops and luring them always farther. The lights went out in the little villages and they became black and mysteriously still.

"Dead little houses," said Anthony, "why are

people so silly as to sleep inside them?"

He was full of life that night. Horatia was close to him—still—happy—his machine quivered and sped under his touch and he had all that he loved most in the world around him. Horatia's own youth woke in answer to this appetite for life which showed in the man's firm, vigorous handling of his wheel and the joyous lift of his head.

"Are you happy, Horatia?"

"Quite happy." She was sincere. There were no problems or worries in her head, the moment was enough.

"We get along pretty well," said Anthony happily.

"Don't we."

Horatia never thought that Anthony might be making love to her. Love to her was already couched in different terms. She liked his phrasing and she liked him. He was such a human companion and they were alone before such vastnesses that she found herself responding to the touch of his shoulder. They were leaning back in the roadster, shoulders touching lightly.

"Life's queer, Anthony. When we expect to be happy we aren't and when you don't expect it,

it comes."

"We don't know when to expect it," answered

Anthony sagely.

He talked well that night and from that night on as she thought of her future Horatia began to compare and contrast Anthony's plan of life. On this ride he left out most of his vehement, laughable sociology, and talked of business. He had been fascinated, startled by the vast machinery of moving grain across the world. The great scale on which it was done thrilled him. "Feeding the world," he said, with no great humanitarian feeling but as if the magnificence of the act had gripped his imagination. He was going to take charge of part of the business after he had seen the eastern end of it.

"I thought you wanted to travel before you began work."

"I've changed my mind. I want to be a man—a mature man soon—and a mature man must have a job."

Self-absorbed Horatia, who did not guess from those words of what else he was thinking! But she did not trouble about Anthony much. She generalized Anthony.



"Yes-we-all men and women must work."

"Not women always and not as hard as men."
Horatia waived the point. It was a nice gallantry, she thought. She was not ready to work

anyway, just yet.

They passed a strange light half hidden in the bushes just then, and whatever else Anthony had meant to say was quite forgotten for the moment, He was suddenly alert. Without a word he went into reverse and backed up to the roadside.

"Stay where you are, Horatia," he said briefly

and decisively.

She leaned forward. He was beside the light and suddenly she saw what Anthony had seen at once. It was an overturned roadster—its tail light gleaming in the marshy grass. She saw Anthony peering around, then bending. With a leap she was beside him and he gave her a quick, appraising glance.

"When I lift,-pull."

Amazingly she was pulling, pulling and brushing aside obstacles that felt like the overturned paraphernalia of the car. She was pulling a woman—a girl awkwardly thrown prostrate and still. And then they found the man. Anthony seemed to know exactly what to do. He was almost professional.

"We'll leave him—it's no use," he said. "And carry her. Hold her in your lap and I'll drive.

We can't waste a minute."

The inert body of the girl hung heavily over the side of the car and Horatia's lap. "How far must we go?"

"Five or six miles. I saw the man's letters—he seems to come from there—Winchester."

At the Winchester hospital they found after an anxious hour that the girl was only stunned and bruised. She would be all right. She was easily identified—a girl about town.

The young man seemed to be a person of prominence. An odd stiffness of local scandal hung over the necessary inquiries. Evidently the association of the man and girl was not discussible. The police notified the man's father and a party set out for the wreck with Anthony as guide.

Horatia had a glimpse of a white, stricken, elderly man bending over the body and heard him groan in horrified pain. There was nothing left for them to do. They turned towards home.

"Poor devil," said Anthony, "he's gone and there's an awful gap somewhere. Because he wanted to be a bounder. Nice-looking fellow he was, too."

"Let's get home quickly," begged Horatia.

Anthony turned to look at her.

"Sorry it happened," he said briefly, "but you were game, Horatia. Lord, but you were game."

She tried to smile and only succeeded in turning very faint.

"I never saw a dead person before except my mother, and I can't remember that."

"You never——" Anthony stopped the car and put a quick arm about her shoulders. "What a damned shame! Just rest—just forget it."



From that night they were closer comrades than ever before. And it was during the weeks that followed that Horatia found herself writing less and less to Jim. It was very hard to write. She couldn't put all she wanted to say in one letter and she didn't know whether he would understand all the things she was thinking unless she wrote him very fully. That could all come later, she told herself—now she wanted strength and calmness. Nothing, according to Marjorie Clapp, was so worth while as strength and health. And more and more she found Marjorie and Anthony establishing standards by which she measured life.

They were so sure, and yet not sure as Maud was sure—with aggressiveness and assertiveness. They did not try to decide everything for everyone and they were slow of condemnation in most respects and rather open to new beliefs.

"Have you no imperfections?" wailed Horatia

to Mariorie.

Marjorie stared at her. "What have I been assuming?" she asked in horror. "What sort of prig——"

"It's because you don't assume. Because you are modern without bragging of it and conservative when it is for the safety of things. Because

you are actually getting somewhere."

"Well," said Marjorie, "one of my imperfections is that I fairly soak in such talk about myself. I've been through the mill, Horatia. I've wondered and puzzled and hated being called a

reactionary. There was a time when bobbing my hair and taking a lover instead of a husband seemed the brave thing to do. And then I decided that it wasn't, after all. That it was my fear of being called stupid and not my conviction of what was progress that was holding me back from the commonplaces of being a wife and mother. Inwardly I approved of lots of things and outwardly I was afraid to give in to them for fear of being ordinary. But I'm sure now. I've burned my bridges. I want to give my children the best of the old régime. The new régime will unavoidably make advances to them and they may accept a lot of them. That's all right toothe old and the new make a fine blend. And I try to keep in touch with things so nothing will shock or frighten me. Why are you so worried?"

"I'm not really, just now. I'm as content as a cat. But I suppose I ought to know where I stand and as a matter of fact I don't. I ought to know what people I want to run with. I've seen a lot of kinds. And I don't really fit in anywhere. Someone told me that I was only fit to do lip service to modernism, the other day. That bothered me. I had taken it for granted that I was a modern. It seemed indecent not to be."

"But you are. Anyone who sees you knows that you are carrying on into the future."

"This person didn't think so." And for the second time, omitting her personal connection, Horatia told Grace's story.

"Poor Grace," said Marjorie.



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"That's just it. I didn't feel 'poor Grace.' I felt 'plague-stricken—unclean Grace.' And it began in me a lot of uncertainties. If she was like that—if marriage was as wretched and unreliable as she claimed—where can I turn for faith? You help restore faith but what if you are a shining exception?"

Anthony came in and stood against the door looking tall and immensely confident. Perhaps Marjorie felt he was the answer to Horatia's appeal. Anyway she went away and sent them iced tea and sandwiches.

CHAPTER XX

A T just what point Horatia realized that Anthony still loved her and that his love could be called by no other name was quite cloudy in her own mind. Perhaps her first intimation of it came that very afternoon when he stood looking at her silently after Marjorie slipped away. It was a very revealing look and Horatia would have been stupid indeed not to have felt its quality. She pulled herself alert from the relaxed position she had been indulging in on the cushioned settee and put her hands laughingly to her disheveled hair.

"Please don't embarrass me, Anthony. I know I'm tousled."

"I love to look at you tousled. I love to look at you anyway and at any time. It's all——" he stopped and pulled her to her feet, retrieving himself gaily. "Don't bewitch me, young woman. Didn't I get my orders not to be in love with you?"

But there was a tense look in his eyes that set Horatia wondering.

Five months ago she had been filled with humiliation and actual distaste by his declaration of love for her. Two months before, when she had first come to the country, she would have been revolted and frightened away. But the



situation was changed. Anthony had grown to be a part of her life. And he was more skilful than he had been in the spring. He was very slow in his love-making, careful not to outrage her feelings, careful not to ask for anything. By words sometimes, but more often by the devotion of actions, by the constant protective care with which he surrounded her, Horatia was brought into consciousness of his love. It was easy for her because he asked for nothing. She could like him as much as she pleased and take comfort in the hundred intangible expressions of his love without feeling that she was involved in a love affair. And Jim was not there and his letters were few and repressed in tone. He was her lover—and she was his, thought Horatia, whether she was disappointed or not. That was her promise, but it seemed one which her mind insisted on rather than a conviction springing from the depth of her heart.

Accepting the love-making of two men is often possible, even to a fine, high-minded virtuous woman, if only fastidious ways save her from any sense of promiscuity. Anthony's first attack coming in the spring, when Horatia was surrounded by the very present sense of Jim's love, when she was fresh from his arms, had made her feel indecent. But now, removed from Jim, cooled and drawn little by little into a new atmosphere, Anthony's love filled her at first with a gentle regret and then little by little, accepting his attentions and never finding the moment when she was both

able and willing to tell him that she did not want him to care for her, there came to be a question about Anthony in her mind. It was, for instance, difficult to say to him when he was folding a wrap about her shoulders, "You must not be so considerate of me if your consideration means that you love me." Yet, accepting publicly a hundred special attentions and thoughtfulnesses, seeing in Maud's glances and in Marjorie's what they hoped and expected, the thing lost its repugnant aspect. She could hardly feel that this devotion of Anthony's which everyone approved of and which was so gentle a thing, could be shameful. especially when she was not reinforced by the expression of Jim's love. Sometimes an unpleasant thought rose in her mind, contrasting this steady devotion, unreturned and unwelcomed, with the love of Jim which circumstances seemed to have so easily defeated. Yet it was significant that Anthony did not find a chance to make love to her openly and fervently and that she kept him from any declaration. One thing she knew very clearly—that she would hate to put Anthony definitely out of her life and that the moment of doing so could be postponed. Her sister did not plan to return until October. There was still a month before she need face issues. If she dabbled sometimes in the thought of Anthony's life, that was only natural for he spread his plans before her. It would be an orderly, progressive life, fine, easeful and not selfish so much as concentrated on self-development.



"But Anthony, where does your duty to society come in?"

"In being a decent, useful citizen myself. Not in trying to pauperize other people—or humiliate them. In voting right and standing right on things-sounds awfully priggish, but really I suppose it's summed up in being an example as far as a very imperfect person can be, and in doing my own job."

"But somebody has to pioneer for the weak ones." She was thinking of Langley to whom it could never have occurred to be an example to society but who worked unremittingly on the chance that he might reduce the hypocrisy and selfishness and viciousness around him. It came to her that Anthony's method was infallible as far as it went and Jim's dangerously fallible and uncomfortable. Anthony would never have anything to reproach himself with—Jim might have much. He was answering.

"There wouldn't be so many weak ones if everyone did his job and did it right. The weak ones are the result of bad living and the ones who go out to reform all this weakness—who are they?—old maids—unhealthy and unhappy freak men, abnormal in their living. I tell you the country needs steadying, Horatia, and steady-

ing by example, not by speech-making."

"And that method is self-preservation for you, of course-and comfort," said Horatia, a little caustically.

"Yes—of course. I think it should be. I think

—I think it's much more sensible to preserve yourself, for you and all women to establish homes and families and keep healthy instead of running around city streets and city slums."

Horatia chuckled. "You're a divine advocate of woman's place in the home. You make it seem so tempting."

The feeling in his face leapt into flame.

"Can I make it tempting enough?"

She drew away a little nervously.

"Oh, personally, I'll always prefer the streets. I'm a natural born gutter-pup."

"You're naturally the most wonderful woman in the world and you're meant for the truest and best things."

"Don't praise me, please, Anthony. I hate it."

"Then don't say such silly things."

He walked up and down and then returned to her, still trying to plead impersonally.

"I'm not a bully or a reactionary—I don't want to run anybody's life. I don't believe in this male superiority stuff either. And I've been with you and Marjorie enough to have an enormous respect for women. She's not tied down. She's the freest woman I know."

"Yes, because she is doing what she wants to do."

Gradually in this way a choice was placed before Horatia, a choice of lives. She evaded the main issue, the issue which would ultimately make choice for her—that must be which man drew her most. She compared lives as if it were a



problem in sociology she had before her. Anthony had respected her desire to have him keep from definite questions but she knew that he was laying his life before her. And she reviewed it. She saw that she and Anthony together and others like them, mental aristocrats, secure in material things, could take their places in a society of flux and uncertainty, and be beacon lights of strength and security, she as a woman, raising woman's functions to fine dignity, strong in love and content and purpose. She saw herself taking up the burdens which other cheaper women laid down, dignifying a home and wifehood and maternity.

And on the other side stretched life with lim. a life of puzzles, inquiries, unsolved problems, a life among the problems of the world, solving them not by keeping unsullied but by enduring with them, by growing weary and impatient and often arriving at no solution. And the domestic side of life with Jim would be a life without great regularity or great certainty of ease—how could she fit Iim into domestic routine and how could she fit in these strange friends of Jim's whom he refused to give up, into a life of dignity and order? Even against his protests, the work would call her back to it and she would have to adjust her wifehood and child-bearing to all this-and there would never be enough money so that they could live in the careless ease which took money for granted. Jim's side seemed to suffer in comparison with the other life and yet why was it that she did not make a decision against it and put it out of her mind?

Maud came out into the open a little more. She talked Anthony. And once she became rather fundamental in her talk—for Maud.

"I haven't said much about Jim Langley," she said. "And since I saw him, I'll admit that he is fascinating. But there are things no girl understands, Horatia. And you don't realize what a tremendous thing it is to try to change a man's habits. Langley isn't a domestic sort and if you marry a man you're bound to live his life. In the end most women want a regular kind of home. I don't want to force you, Horatia, but it does seem as if Anthony were so exactly the right man."

Unexpectedly Horatia kissed her.

"Poor Maud," she said, "you do want me to be comfortable, don't you? But if Jim had Anthony's money I wonder what you'd feel about the right man?"

"Don't be silly," Maud returned, with her pragmatism rising to the surface at once. "He hasn't the money, has he? My dear, if you knew more about things! If you could see the scraping to get along! I don't see as much of it as I used to, but Heaven knows there are plenty of people who have to do it. There are such a lot of women trying to get along on too little and keep things up."

"Their trouble is that they are always trying to throw a bluff."

"Well," her sister answered reflectively, "you



must admit that some things—babies now, for instance—take money. Of course if you don't want children you get along without that. But even then there are clothes and houses—and illness."

Horatia had an impulse to make herself under-

stood on that point.

"As for babies," she said, "I want babies. Marriage without them isn't worth bothering about. They weight marriage—make it of consequence."

"They hold a man," said Maud. "Now there never was a better man than Harvey. But there have been times when I've seen women look at him, wondering just how much married he was and I've been glad I had Jackie and the baby. Men are funny in their feelings towards women but they are pretty certain about their children. I've known women who didn't have children who were precious sorry before they got through."

"You're strictly utilitarian in your use of emotion, aren't you, Maud?"

But Maud looked vague at that and turned to the final ordering of her living-room. It was really all in order, deep, willow chairs with bright cushions in their most comfortable hollows, a teatable before the empty fireplace and tall glasses already on it. Maud was expecting guests for tea. She had informally asked a few important matrons and chosen this date with much care. The last dance of the summer—the only semiformal one, was to be held in a week at the Country Club. Maud wanted to be sure of enjoying herself on that occasion and to be on an easy

familiar footing with the summer residents. Hence this very informal, extremely important preceding afternoon at her cottage.

Maud was all a-flutter as her first guests came but as more arrived until at length most of the hoped-for were assembled, her asurance rose. The last comer was Mrs. Stanley Clifford in white organdie and a broad-brimmed hat.

"I brought my guest, Mrs. Hill," she said to Maud in gracious explanation and Maud bubbled with welcomes. But as she turned to introduce Horatia, a sudden constraint was in the air.

"I have met Miss Grant," said Mrs. Hill, "when she was working on *The Journal*. She went to great pains to frustrate my plan for a soldiers' and sailors' memorial."

She spoke quite clearly. Horatia looked at her with cool gravity, conscious that the eyes of everyone in the room were on her.

"I remember," she said, without the faintest apology.

Marjorie's laugh came to the rescue.

"Now don't scold dear Horatia," she pleaded gaily, "none of us really wanted that memorial job. And Horatia had sense enough to see it." She moved Mrs. Hill off and the incident passed over. But Horatia felt a little chilled. This was part of the society to which it had seemed so dignified to belong. This woman with her illbred onslaught was part of it. Her mind brushed aside these contacts, these people; they were illusions. The strong virility of the life in the

newspaper office—the personal freedom—flashed before her. Here she was not quite free—here she could not be quite straightforward. She could not turn to Mrs. Hill and say again what she thought of that preposterous plan. She must let the matter rest. It was part of the game.

She forgot certain limitations in the newspaper office. For a moment it stood out richly against

a paler background.

"Odious creature, she is," whispered Maud over the tea-table. "Glad you let it pass like a good sport."

CHAPTER XXI

IM was finding it heavy going. Determined as his effort was to keep himself up to his recent, his Horatia-stirred pitch, he was forced to work harder than was reasonable or good for He had given up Horatia, but surely the feeling must have persisted that she might refuse to be given up and that separation for a little while would bring them together again. had not been so lonely it would not have been so hard for him. But many as were his acquaintances there was not one to whom he could have confided anything about himself and Horatia. When he was through with his work, and even he must admit that, if he was to work next day, each day must be allowed to end, he took long walks through the city streets, not slow, philosophic, reflective walks, but he hurried along like a man possessed or trying to get away from something -memories perhaps. Despite his careful grooming he was thinner—weary looking. It was very great strength which kept him from going to Horatia-or writing her. Two or three times he went so far as to get time-tables for the trains to the hill district. And how he hungered for news of her showed in the way he spent an hour discussing politics with Seth Heatherly, just back from a cottage near Maud's-Seth Heatherly,



who bored Jim to death but who at the end of the tedious conversation said that he had seen Horatia at a club dance with young Wentworth and that he thought there was something doing. Jim left him shortly after that and yet it was not to work for he did not return to *The Journal* office at all that afternoon.' He went to his own rooms and shut himself up. There was plenty of plain masculine fierceness and jealousy left in Jim under all his careful impersonality and apparent detachment. And so two months passed and it was mid-September.

Little Miss Christie did not think Mr. Langley looked well and, coming back from her vacation, she plucked up courage to tell him that she thought he should go away for a change. Jim was courteously non-committal and a flush rose into the self-conscious freckled cheeks until Jim noticed her sense of a rebuff and spoke to her a little more personally.

"I'm feeling all right. You look fine yourself, Miss Christie."

"I am fine. Better than I've felt in a long time. Better than I've ever felt since that dreadful thing happened in Mr. Hubbell's office."

Jim idly probed her. He had never asked her about that before.

"You were the girl who was there at the time it happened."

"Not just then, Mr. Langley. You remember he sent me out on an errand. It was while I was out that he did it. He had been acting queerly for some time but I never dreamed of such a thing. If I only hadn't gone! And he was so good to me. He never minded all the mistakes I used to make—I was just out of business college."

Jim smiled grimly. It was so absurd to think of Miss Christie's supposing that her presence would have kept Jack Hubbell from the extreme edge of despair. She was talking on nervously now, tactlessly, as if a spring had been touched.

"It must have been a comfort to you to have his last words."

"You're mistaken. I didn't have any words with him. I got there much later."

"I meant in the letter he wrote that afternoon."

"He didn't write me any letter," Jim answered, a little impatient of this opening up of intimate things with his stenographer. But Miss Christie opened her eyes and blundered on.

"I mean the one Mrs. Hubbell took—with her own."

Jim's body tightened just a little with sudden interest. But he remained calm. His next words put Miss Christie in a fright.

"I want you to tell me exactly what you know about that letter."

The girl seemed to see all at once that she was making new history.

"Maybe she lost it," she said feebly.

"Will you please tell me what I ask about that letter? Tell me just what happened that afternoon."



Miss Christie gasped.

"Mr. Hubbell came in about five, quite excited—very hurried. He went into his office and shut the door—later he called me and said, 'Letter to Mr. James Langley'—then he changed his mind and said he would write it by hand. About an hour later he came in and told me to go out and get some stamps and then to stamp and mail at once the two letters on his desk. When I came back he'd—done it. I stood staring at him and at the letters—they were to you and Mrs. Hubbell—I saw that. And then poor Mrs. Hubbell came in. The rest all was told at the inquest."

"Yes—all that about going out for stamps. But why nothing about my letter?"

"Mrs. Hubbell read hers and then picked up yours and said to me that Mr. Hubbell wanted those letters to be a sacred secret—that she would give you yours personally and that I was especially not to mention that she had had any letter. It was his wish. It was all she could say. She put the letters in her dress and fainted dead away."

Jim sat looking blankly at the credulous little thing before him, reciting her story with such interest in its drama.

"Mrs. Hubbell was good to you?" he asked.

"She was an angel." The girl's eyes filled. "Said she would do all she could to carry out his wishes and she told me that the trouble between them had been a hideous misunderstanding. She sorrowed terribly and she sent me away to get away from the reporters. They asked me so many

questions. But I never told about those letters. Only I supposed——"

"That I got mine? Now, Miss Christie, I want you to keep your silence even more strictly. Never mention those letters or the tragedy again. That will do, today. You needn't worry. Nothing will happen."

Poor little Miss Christie was dazed at what she had done, a good romance spoiling in her mind. She had thought Jim and Mrs. Hubbell, lovers, innocent lovers, refusing to marry because of their fidelity to the dead man. And he had killed himself because he had found out that he had accused her unjustly. Had she not seen many a scenario with even more serious complications?

Jim found Rose at home. She was plainly surprised and pleased at his voice over the house telephone and received him in the grey room, in modified negligee,—a white Mandarin coat over a gold silk skirt. She came towards him both hands outstretched but the grimness on his face stopped her.

"I came," he said, "for my letter."

And her immediate pallor, preceding her assumed bewilderment, told him that Miss Christie had told the truth.

"What letter-what's the trouble, Jim?"

"The letter Jack wrote to me the day he died."

"He didn't give me any letter to you---"

"No,—you took it—fairly out of his dead hand."

"You're crazy, Jim!"



"No-I've been interviewing Miss Christie!"

If poor Miss Christie could have seen the hard look on her benefactor's face, how her scenario would have been shattered!

"Is that girl back here?"

"She's been working in my office."

Mrs. Hubbell paused for a second as if to select a cue. She chose it with quick decision and acted without delay.

"You should have looked into her references before you engaged her," she said coolly.

He was grimly silent, looking at her as if wondering what the best tactics would be.

"That Christie girl," she said, "seems to have her own reasons for maligning me. I've never looked into it closely but it appears—an office liaison with Jack——" she shrugged. "So she hates me—naturally."

"That's a wrong twist, Rose. In the first place I knew Jack. In the second place poor Miss Christie evidently idolizes the ground you walk on. No—you've become absurd. Where is that letter?"

"I don't know what you are talking about and I haven't any desire to argue with you if you're drunk or crazy."

He only laughed and sat down.

"A struggle, is it? Well, let's see the possibilities. If I don't get that letter I publish your story. I'm not afraid of the press, God knows. And Jack wasn't. Make a good feature story. With a few pictures of you. The newspapers must still have some of yours on file."

She looked at him with venomous hate.

"Beast!"

He did not notice her.

"I wonder if you destroyed that letter. There's a good deal of reason to suppose that you didn't. People—especially women—don't destroy letters. They keep them around—even dangerous ones."

He had his eyes apparently on the ground—cleverly cast down but he caught an uncontrollable movement, not of her angry head but of her eyes, toward the spinet desk in the corner. It would have told anyone all he wished to know. But at that moment her tactics changed again.

"Jim, you fool," she said, "I'll tell you about that letter and why I never gave it to you. I did read it—yes. After I read the brutal one to me I had to read yours. In those days I was close to you, you may be gracious enough to remember. I wanted to spare you. I couldn't give you that dead man's curse. I burned it. It was a dreadful letter."

Her shudder was perfect but belated. Earlier she might have hoodwinked Jim again. But not after that little fearful glance at her desk—that utterly involuntary glance.

"Yes," said Jim, quietly, "but it's in that desk."

"So you think I'm a liar!"

"I know that."

He was impatient now. "And I'm going to search that desk."



She was before him but he put her aside with one strong hand and forced her into a chair. Some spring broke in her then. He had taken the right method, physical force, the only thing that cows such a woman. He stood over her menacingly.

"I'll beat you—tie you—if I have to. But I

mean to search that desk."

He pulled the desk open and, disregarding the piles of documents in the pigeon-holes, rummaged through the drawers, pulling them out one by one to see if their bottoms were real. Under one of them was the usual, ridiculous, obvious "secret" drawer. It was locked; he forced it open with a paper-knife and as he did so she sprang again to prevent him. This time he hurled her away with all gentleness forgotten. And within the drawer with three or four other letters was the one he sought.

He put it in an inner pocket with hands that

trembled and then turned to her.

"I'll have you arrested," she cried, but it was a cry of fear, not of rage.

"You've seen your last of me," he returned. "And you'd better get out of town as fast as you can. I don't know what this letter says but it's something you'd like to keep dark. If you leave town I'll drop the matter, unless it is something which must be seen through. If you don't——" he paused at the door, "but why didn't you destroy that letter?"

But the long-standing mystery of why it is

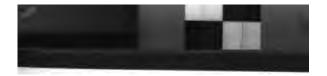
hard to destroy letters remained unsolved by Mrs. Hubbell.

"I meant to," she answered.

Without another word he left her, the letter in his hand. He went to his room and sat for a while before he opened it, terribly shaken by that familiar handwriting. It had been addressed to his rooms, and the flap of the envelope had been steamed loose, untorn. At last he read the incoherent last message of his best friend.

"DEAR JIM-

"How in the name of mercy I can write what I must I don't know. I am in hell. I thought I was in hell before when I found what Rose was. But it's worse now. To find that I've put it on you publicly—to have branded you in my crazy anger as her associate is worse. And I can't bear any more. My head is going to pieces. It's suicide, degradation—madness. Suicide is best. But first you've got to have the facts and my shamed apology and my attempt at reparation. Some things I'll have to tell you—ugly as they are. But there are women who don't deserve the decent chivalry of men's silence. Rose is bad. She never gave me much peace—coldness, hatred, passion—I never knew. But I loved her—a lot of me still loves her—that's the degrading thing. I got unmistakable proofs of her infidelity. had been away and while I was gone someone had spent the night in the house—some man. She stupidly left evidences for me to find. I found



them. I suspect it wasn't the first time but it was the first time she had been stupid. I demanded the name of the man—she wouldn't admit anything. I fell pretty low and opened letters. There was that one from you—you spoke of the 'good time you'd had that night.' I was crazy, you know. Rose was vicious but she did not show especial outrage at my accusing you. She denied everything so I believed everything.

"As far as she was concerned I was right. She was careless enough to receive the man again—at lunch today. With the servant out. I found out and went home to see you and finish with you. But I crept in and found it wasn't you. It was another fellow. They were laughing and having a gay time over the way they were doing us both. The good joke was my interpretation of your letter. You and not he had been the victim, and Rose said you had been with her enough to make me jealous—that you would never deny anything that she didn't want you to.

"How she's played us!

"I'm through. I can't see you because you might dissuade me and I don't want to be dissuaded. The world's rotten and I want to get out of it. Every ounce of rotten passion in me for that woman drags me down farther. It's killing her or myself and it's easier this way. Only please do this for me. Give the statement enclosed to the newspapers. Sounds rather spectacular but it must be done. It must be done.

And for God's sake be careful whom you marry and steer clear of Rose. Good-bye, old Jim."

That was all except for a signed statement saying that John Hubbell wished to publicly acknowledge that in naming James Langley as co-respondent in the case of Hubbell vs. Hubbell he had been under a complete misapprehension and wished so to state—that Mr. Langley was entirely innocent of any such entanglement. It said nothing whatever about his wife.

"Thank God he knew," groaned Jim under his breath. "Thank God he knew." He sat staring bleakly out of his window as if he looked on waste and desolation.

Many thoughts must have been comforting and torturing him. Of course it was too late for the statement to be used but it healed a wound in Jim which even Horatia could not have cured. It must have seemed ironic to him that he had let such a woman come between him and Horatia. That for a promise to such a woman he had waived his right to yield to Horatia's request—worst of all that in the society of such a woman he had let Horatia linger. If reason told him that the cause of his separation from Horatia might have been anything else, still there might not have been any immediate cause of alienation.

He looked at the time-tables taken from his pocket. They showed him what he knew, that within six hours he could be with Horatia. But



the flame in his face died out and he looked again bitter—discouraged. There was Anthony!

That night the most dreadful forest fires of years broke out around the city. There were always forest fires—often very bad ones, but never had they been so terrible and so devastating. It was a relief to Jim to bury himself in the work of help as well as of publicity. The Hill district was safe. He kept half a dozen wires busy until he was sure of that. This fire was coming from the other way, sweeping through the farming country, destroying homes, farms, cattle and human life.

That night too, in one of the large city hospitals on the other side of the city, several babies were born. The nurse made the mother of one of them as comfortable as she could and then tiptoed out.

"Rotten to be as alone as that," she confided to another blue and white figure, whom she met in the nursery. "Usually you have somebody around. But she didn't have a soul."

"Where is her husband?"

"I asked her. She said that he was out of the country. She looks respectable enough. Good clothes—not a bit sporty."

"He probably is away—or a rotter."

"Put a tape on the kid's arm, will you?"

"What number is her room?"

"434. Isn't Mrs. Gordon in 434? Yes."

"Cute baby. Is she glad it's a girl?"

"Says she is. I asked her what she was going

to call it. She was sort of sleepy, but she said Horatia. Funny name, isn't it?"

Mrs. Gordon was Grace Walsh.

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Horatia's old housemate lay back further on her pillow in her bare hospital room and smiled wearily at some thought. Perhaps she was thinking she would not be so alone now.



CHAPTER XXII

KEEPING an appointment, Kathleen Boyce dropped in next day. Her tall indolent figure, prematurely wrapped in loosely hanging furs, stood in the doorway surprisedly.

"Not dressed yet, Rose? Have you forgotten that we're going to that showing at Boyle's?"

In the afternon light Mrs. Hubbell's face looked sallow and mean little lines dragged down the corners of her mouth.

"Boyle's? I don't want to go to Boyle's."

"Sick or bored?"

"Both—and done with this place. I'm off for New York next week. Look in there. I'm packing. I'll do better in New York than I could at Boyle's, I guess. Look here, Kathleen, why don't you come with me?"

"Can't afford a winter in New York. My modest alimony isn't able to hold a candle to your fortune. Sometimes a living husband isn't as gen-

erous as a dead one."

Rose smiled viciously.

"Jack wasn't as rich as lots of people think. I'd my own income."

Kathleen let the statement pass. Delving into Rose's affairs was fatiguing. But she shrugged just enough to show her friend that the talk about an independent income didn't deceive her at all.

"What's driving you away?"

"What's there to keep me?"

"Well—the gilded Mr. Martin—and me—and always Jim."

Mrs. Hubbell sneered.

"I wonder," said Kathleen negligently, "I've always wondered what you got out of that Jim proposition. He obviously wasn't able to take care of you or marry you and you knew some flapper would grab him sooner or later. Rather a nice flapper too. And you didn't want to marry him!"

"Marry him! I hate him! I never wanted him! He's crooked anyhow."

"Oh, come now, Rose." Kathleen was adroitly probing and thoroughly enjoying herself. It was cheering to know that something was driving Rose away from her last decent quarry. Kathleen had few scruples but she had some and Horatia had waked one of them.

"Drop Jim, then." Rose was brief. "And better come to New York."

"Where are you going?"

"Apartment-somewhere."

"Alone—any attachments?"

"Not yet," said Rose brazenly.

"Well—I guess I won't come. I'm not ready. I'll be along later, maybe."

Kathleen was not tight-laced but she did not care to spend a winter with Rose. And Rose must have known it and included her in the general hate she was lavishing today. She had had a

disagreeable morning with her check-book. What she told Kathleen had been in part true. Her husband had not been as rich as people thought—but the fact that he had died intestate, having somehow forgotten to make a will or perhaps not having cared enough to make one, had left her generously taken care of. She had spent overlavishly however and well as she knew how to supplement her income she was just now more pressed than she cared to admit.

Languidly Kathleen said good-bye and made her exit into the street to be stared at and admired and to wend her way to Boyle's to study fashions and look at clothes she could not afford to buy. Thence to dinner and the theatre with some man. So futile, so lazy, so stupid a life! But without great malice was Kathleen. She was glad her friend was going, though it would mean that a good organizer of parties was lost to their vague circle.

Rose packed her trunk, and made her plans. A few days before she left she received, by appointment, a heavy, youngish, florid man of perhaps thirty-two or three. She was lovely and soft that night—tinted with rose by the light of her candles. The man sat beside her and caressed her with some enthusiasm.

"About ready to go?" he asked.

"And lonely—I wish you'd come with me."

"Maybe I will if you ask me nicely. Do you really want me or are you just broke?"

"Both."

He took that as a rare joke.

"Well, by George, you're honest anyhow. How much?"

"Later," she answered negligently. "Time

enough for that. Will you come?"

"I will, if you'll devote yourself to entertaining me. Just me—mind. You will too. We've had some great times. I've never forgotten what a peach you were that winter after your trouble. And you were pretty clever. No one ever suspected I was implicated. It would have been rotten if they had. Not a cent for little Willie if he doesn't go straight, says the old man. That means not a cent for Rosie. So I've got to be pretty careful here. But in New York——"

"When you get it yourself, will you marry

me?"

"The money?" A shrewd, hard little look passed between them. He stroked her arm. "Well, he's a long liver and there's a jolly good income for me—and you—now. What's the use of bothering?"

"None." She knew that he wouldn't marry

her.

"When do we leave?"

"I'll leave Sunday, and wait over in Chicago. You can meet me by accident on the flyer Tuesday."

"And you'll get the accommodations?"

She nodded a little wearily.

Her packing was very complete. Her furniture was put into storage, and the agent of her



apartment agreed, after a struggle, to sublet it. When it came to business the languorous eyes of Mrs. Hubbell could become immensely practical and definite and she could out-Herod most of her tradespeople. She got what she wanted out of men whether she had to try wits or emotions on them.

On Sunday, unattended, after a few curiously casual telephone calls of farewell, she left on the Chicago train. Through the early evening, which darkened so early now, the train sped along and in her compartment Rose sat close to the window, still as a sphinx. The shadows crept over her lovely face and softened it. And her thoughts softened it too, making her so alluring that men on their way to the dining-car turned back to repass her open door. But she did not seem to notice them. Who could tell of what she was thinking? Of a misspent selfish life which had ridden cruelly roughshod over the lives of the people around her? Of Jack Hubbell, the gentle, loving, passionate man, who had given her everything a man could give and whom she had cheated in return? Of how she might have been still a revered and loved wife if it had not been for the strange devil in her which hungered after looseness and hated control? No-more likely it was of the man she was to meet day after tomorrow "by accident," of the way to manage him and bring him to the point of arranging for her future: of his possibilities and financial solidity. There were so many things of which she might

have been thinking if she looked into her past and future as the train sped along faster and faster, carrying her away from the lives which she had scarred. But the scars were healing and she would never harm those lives again.

Her passing was only casually noted. At the restaurants and hotels they asked after her once or twice. That was all—they soon forgot to ask.



CHAPTER XXIII

HE hills were in their most magnificent autumn color. When the sun shone the masses of trees were almost unbearably brilliant. Scarlet and vellow shaded into orange and crimson and in all the riot there was not one discordant note. On the shadowy, misty days Horatia loved it best. Then the colors seemed a saddened glory, hinting at their own passing. And to see the leaves reflected in the lakes—wonderful colored mirrors—was the most wonderful sight of all. She loved to take Anthony's canoe and drift over the reflections, moving so silently and graciously that the movement seemed unreal. The time was coming when she must leave all this and she was clinging to her peace. It had been peace. Only lately had the old restlessness come to disturb her. Only lately had she begun to wonder what was happening in the city. Her weariness had passed and she was eager for life again. But as she made ready for action she realized that she must reconstruct in the light of what she had learned and that one of her first problems would be Anthony.

Anthony, slender and strong in his khaki clothes, bareheaded, energetic, full of life, Anthony kind and tender, Anthony brave and gen-

erous, Anthony controlled and yet full of fire, Anthony burning for life himself, intolerant of shabbiness or weakness, Anthony the aristocrat. There was no possible great criticism of Anthony. Little things, perhaps, Horatia would admit to herself, but as a man he showed few weaknesses. He had a great deal to offer and he was offering it in all but words. Marjorie could have told her that Anthony was not himself at all—that the Anthony his sister saw sometimes was a frightened boy with all his self-assurance gone, saying to her:

"She'll never have me. I know she won't. I haven't a thing to offer her—none of this high-brow stuff she's so keen for."

And again Anthony was a dominant man who watched for the woman he wanted and as he watched and planned could say exultantly:

"I'll do everything in the world to make her happy and I know I'm the sort of person to do it. She needs the life I can give her. I'm sure she does—calmness—protection—she needs a husband."

And yet again he said nothing at all but looked hungry or was exuberantly gay.

Without the slightest resentment Marjorie came very close to Horatia. She liked her more and more, as she told Anthony, and whatever her hopes were, she kept them to herself.

The Country Club dinner-dance had come and Horatia in Maud's yellow dress with the soft yellow chiffon hat on her head was very beauti-



ful. As Aunt Caroline had sagely said, "yellow was becoming to one so dark," and the softness of it and the rosy brown of Horatia's country color made her look like the autumn itself. She had borrowed a black velvet coat from Maud and stood with it over her arm, gazing through the casement window of the living-room. A little early—she had known that he would be—Anthony was there, and he stopped at the door with a long ecstatic whistle.

"Stunning, Horatia! Where did you keep all this radiance? Is this the way you dress in the

country?"

"Mostly Maud's," said Horatia. "The hat was a debauch—a mortal sin!"

"It's as attractive as sin," he agreed, helping her aboard the car.

They had become very used to the roadster, thought Horatia. It seemed as if this place belonged to her. She said so.

"It does belong to you—all of it from the tail light to the carburetor! And the chauffeur is

thrown in!"

"Look out—I'll take it as a deed of gift!"

"I'll tell you how to take it—no, not now——Look here—you're not going next week, are you?"

"We must. Maud has to open up her town house and it's getting cold for the children."

"Let them go and stay yourself."

"I must go to work, young man."

"On that newspaper? Isn't that all over?"

Her face clouded, but they were at the club and he could not go on.

It was a successful dinner. Maud found people all over the room whom she knew and whom, after her tea-party, she dared approach. She made inquiries about their plans—tentative advances towards a continuation of their society in the city, and was not rebuffed—to her great delight. Her table, with Anthony and Horatia, was rather noticeable and Maud, more than the absorbed young people, felt the looks and glances of men and women turning towards the lovely girl in yellow and the whispering about the situation which everyone suspected between her and young-Wentworth.

Horatia had never been more radiant. admiration in Anthony's eyes was answered by the feeling in her own. She felt very young and handsome, part of all this high-bred color and gaiety. And Anthony felt that he had reached the climax of his courting and that at last the time was ripe. They rose from the table and swung into a dance in the open space in the middle of the room, alone on the floor for an instant. He was suddenly immensely conscious of the glances towards them and that the glances recognized Horatia as his. He drew her closer than he usually did. Her arm lay over his shoulder and her cheek was close to his own as they swung into each movement of the dance. floor grew crowded and he held her protectingly now, guiding her against casual contact as if he



was trying to express his desire to so guide her always. It was not an embrace and yet Horatia felt it as one, and was not as she usually was while she danced—aware of only music and rhythm; now she was aware of Anthony. There was a response in her unexpected to herself. She gave herself up to his leadership and this assumption of control. All the instincts which for generations have encouraged women to lean on men awoke in her and for those few moments she knew the joy which women have always had and will always have in being cared for, in having decisions made for them and their wills bent to the desires of others. Such instincts had never had any encouragement from Horatia. were latent in the depths of a femininity which she never would willingly develop greatly, but instincts can live along without nourishment, yet now and then rise to the surface of a life with immense power.

The music stopped and he unwillingly released her.

"Horatia," he said, his voice very soft and grave with emotion, "Horatia—sweetheart——"

She flushed and the flush rose like a tide of feeling.

A little dizzy, they made their way back to the table.

There were many partners for Horatia that night. She danced as she had never danced before. To the old accuracy and conscientiousness of her steps was added a vigor, a vivaciousness

and a pliability that for the moment gave her Rose Hubbell's gift of motion. She suited herself to each man, but in the dances with Anthony she was more pliable and yet more vigorous than she had ever been.

An evening colored like the autumn with splendid gorgeousness and as transient. The time came when Anthony could stand it no longer.

"Haven't you had enough of this? Will you come for a ride? And then I'll take you home."

Her crisis was upon her and a fear overtopped by courage filled her.

They stopped to tell Maud and Marjorie. Maud's benignant glance jarred Horatia, but Anthony did not even see it. Nor did he catch the look of half-worry, half-confidence which his sister gave him. All that he felt was Horatia's hand upon his arm.

Silently they drove through the night, bewildered by the vastness of this thing they had brought upon themselves. They turned from the highway into a country road and there Anthony stopped the car at the beginning of a wooded path they both knew, magical now in the dim moonlight.

"Let's walk a bit."

But they had not walked far before he slipped his arm through hers and turned her to him. Gently he drew her closer until her head was near his shoulder. Even then he could only say her name at first, lovingly, longingly, brokenly, and then—



"I love you so, Horatia, I love you so."

He kissed her forehead and she did not resist. It amazed her that she felt no resistance—no desire to pull away from him, and the next words were the words which best pleaded his cause.

"We were made for each other."

That was what she had been wondering. It helped her to have him so sure. Perhaps they were made for each other.

"See how your head fits into the curve of my arm. It belongs there. You are so beautiful—so lovely, Horatia."

But after a little he wanted his response.

"Do you love me a little?"

"I don't know. I am so puzzled—so unsure of myself. I don't know."

That did not frighten him.

"You will love me," he said, confidently, "because I'll love you so much that you can't help it. Because I adore you."

"I'm afraid I'm only hypnotized by all this atmosphere sometimes—by the kindness and the care you've given me."

"Then you can stay hypnotized—you can stay hypnotized forever because I haven't begun to be kind to you yet or to care for you as I am going to. There are so many things I want to do."

"Perhaps I only want to lie back and let you do them—perhaps it's all laziness. If I can only be sure, Anthony!"

"Don't worry about it, sweetheart. This is all natural. It will all take its natural course."

Horatia was not listening.

"A few months ago it was Jim. You remember how I told you it was Jim then. Aren't you aghast at my infidelity?"

He was glad to have Jim's name in the open, reluctant as he was to spoil his love-making by discussion.

"It's not infidelity, sweetheart. It was the excitement—the fascination of certain circumstances. It wasn't real. You imagined yourself into a situation. This is real. I want you to marry me soon and let me show you how real it can be. I want to live with you. Every moment I spend away from you now is wasted. I want to have you always—with me—in our home—in the depths of me—my wife."

He had let her go a little, visioning the life as it came to him-emotion enriched by the joy of life together. Horatia watched his face, tender, immensely uplifted by this passion which led so directly to the high-spirited life of which he dreamed. And a change was coming over her. She was no longer relaxed. His love had not repelled her. But this talk of marriage, this pressing intimacy, was that drawing her? Anthony noticed no change in her. Swept by the sense of her presence, he gathered her close again and, passionate now, bent to her lips with the kiss that told of his passion. But everything changed. That caress woke in her a flood of resistance, of defence, that cleared her mind as a thunderstorm clears the air. It was Jim who had kissed her



like that. It could not be done again. It was Jim who had the right!

She wrenched herself away.

"No-Anthony-no!"

"Did I frighten you, darling? I'm sorry—I'm sorry."

"Not that—you made it clear—I don't love you —I don't love you."

She was almost exultant, so glad was she to have it clear in her mind. He was appalled at her tone, rather than her words.

"What have I done, Horatia? You loved me a moment ago!"

The frightened appeal in his voice broke through her absorption. She faced him quietly, bravely.

"I've been wrong, Anthony. I thought perhaps I did love you. But now I'm sure I don't. I'm sure there can be nothing more between us as I was sure months ago. It's been wicked to let you in for this—I'm sorry—so terribly sorry. I never in my life liked anyone so much or liked to be with anyone so much, but——"

"But that's enough to go on. That's all I ask. You've been rushed too hard. Let the question of love go. Let me love you and you like me—"

She left her hands in his.

"It might be enough, dear Anthony, it might be enough except that I love Jim and I must be with Jim."

There was so much surety, so much yearning

in her voice that he dropped her hands. But he could not cease pleading.

"You don't know what you're doing. It's infatuation. It's so wrong—so unreasonable."

"I've been trying to be reasonable," she answered, with a little gesture that brushed reason aside as irrelevant. "I've been trying to be reasonable and intellectual. Those things don't matter. I love Jim. That, I'm afraid, is all that does matter."

"But later," he cried, tortured, "later you'll find you've done the wrong thing."

"There's no right or wrong thing. It's the only thing."

The tremendous chastity of love was speaking through her and momentarily it sobered Anthony. Reason, emotion might protest in him but before the fact that she was avowing, that she was given to another man, he was helpless. He turned away, the fine carriage of his shoulders changed into the droop of a disappointed boy. And Horatia's heart was full of pity and misery at the inexorableness of his love for her and the impossibility of loving him.

"I'm so sorry—so sorry," she cried.

"It's all right." There was a touch of resentment in his tone. "Well, there's nothing more to be said—and no use prolonging this. I'll take you back."

But at the edge of the wood the memory of that first embrace went to his head and he must embrace her pleadingly, demandingly again. She



was submissive. It was her fault that he felt so. She had made herself clear but she even ventured in her pity to stroke the hair back from his miserable, saddened face.

"I love you, I'll always love you," he groaned. "It's so damned cruel—so unnecessary. Tonight in my arms you loved me. Until you got brooding over memories. I can erase your memories if you give me a chance. I'll give you everything in the world—all the beauty and power of it. Horatia—we're young—we belong together."

But her revelation had been indeed revelation. Cruel, mistaken, even wrong love might be but love was love and to her marrying must include love. It was a stormy drive home. Anthony sullen, angry, pitiful, pleading, almost broke her down. He did break down her confidence and destroy her joy in her revelation, but against the one final fact he battered in vain. At last at the door of Maud's cottage he kissed her again, almost angrily.

"Must I give up? I'll wait—wait—if you say."
"Please give it up, Anthony. It's no good."

He was gone and Horatia, weary and disheveled, sat in her unlit room, watching the road in the moonlight. Soon Maud would be home. She would be angry and disappointed. But she would build other ambitions and not waste the advantages she had gained through this summer. Horatia thought of Marjorie. She would be sorry too. And yet she might understand. Some day Horatia thought, she would tell Mar-

jorie all about it. Now she must go back to her work. Back to *The Journal* if they wanted her. But perhaps they did not—perhaps not even Jim wanted her. No matter. She was buoyed up by a tremendous surety. She had been faithful to her love—she had made sorrow and she might have to face more of it but she had escaped degradation.

Marjorie found Anthony face downwards on his bed. She had never been sure that he would win and now she knew he had lost. She stole in and sat by him, a wise, white figure in her soft negligee.

"She won't have me," he said bitterly.

Marjorie asked no questions-only waited.

"At first she thought she cared—she was so wonderful—but she loves Langley! She found it out when—when I kissed her."

At the intolerable memory he sprang up and paced the room.

"That's final," said his sister, quietly. "She knows."

"She's wrong," cried Anthony. "She belongs to me. I'm the person to make her happy. He's not."

"She loves Jim," said Marjorie under her breath, and dismissing Horatia for a while, she turned to help her brother. There was only a little that she could do but she left him quieter, prouder of himself and his emotion, tortured by the memory of sweetness rather than by bitterness. He was in good hands.



CHAPTER XXIV

AUD was very angry. She was not in good form after her late hours at the dance and added to her physical malaise came this crashing disappointment. It had been actually inconceivable to Maud that Horatia would ultimately refuse Anthony. Didn't he offer everything in the world that Maud held valuable? Before her protests, her storms, her really bitter accusations that Horatia had been cruel and selfish, Horatia was silent, stubbornly silent, Maud said. But it was not stubborn silence. It was sympathy with what Maud wanted and regret for the fact that she could not help her get the things she wanted. Maud had given Horatia a happy summer or she had been at least the occasion of offering her one and Horatia was filled with real gratitude. Maud did not want her to leave. She was full of secret enterprising plans for seeing Marjorie or even Anthony himself and insisting that they press Horatia—Maud stopped at no delicacies when the end was really important. But on that point Horatia was fixed. She would not see Anthony again and she would never allow the question to be reopened. And she was leaving at once.

She left Maud with a wet towel around her head, wailing that her summer had been spoiled.

There had been several times during their talk when Horatia had nearly added insult to injury by laughing at her sister. This was one of them. She had such a clear picture of Maud, reviving after her departure, and planning the best way to utilize Horatia's romance.

"Come, Maud," she said, "think of all the friends you've made."

"I'd like to know how I can keep friends in the face of all the scandal this will make! People will say—and you did encourage him! Just as I was planning to see a lot of these people this winter. They'll all wonder——"

"It will make you interesting, Maud." Horatia did smile a little as she said that.

"Oh, you can laugh!"- Maud's tone was pettish but already there was a touch of secret solace in it.

Horatia left her on that note and took the jitney bus to the station. It was a rickety Ford that rattled and creaked over the hills which she was used to crossing with Anthony or Harvey. But Harvey was in town and there was only the jitney this morning, symbol, thought Horatia, of what the world offered to a woman who had no man to provide for her comfort. The back of the seat hit her spine uncomfortably and she held on to the side, grimly taking pleasure in her own discomfort. Once she saw a roadster coming in a whirl of dust, but it was not Anthony.

The train was no better than the bus. She shared a seat with an amazingly fat and amazing-



ly rude woman who acted as if Horatia's travelling bag was a personal insult and made little digs at it with her umbrella. Horatia idly wondered why she noticed all these things and later why she found it such a nuisance to carry her own bag.

"I'm quite spoiled," she said to herself, "spoiled and soft."

In the station she hesitated. She did not want to go to *The Journal* office until late afternoon and it was only half past ten. The reporters would be there now. By afternoon they would be out and Jim (at the very thought her heart beaf faster), Jim would be alone perhaps. Well, she couldn't go to Maud's house. She boarded a car for West Park.

West Park sat complacently still in the sunlight. Horatia was glad to see it again—glad to come back to its acceptance of everything, including herself. She went up the hill to her uncle's house and Aunt Caroline greeted her with what for Aunt Caroline was almost enthusiasm. She wanted to know all about Maud's babies and Maud's rent and how Horatia liked it. Horatia answered a host of petty questions with no irritation. It was a good thing, she thought, that these bland and undesigning aunts are in the world. How they comfort us in all our worries by their placid fronts and limited worlds. If—

"And how is Mr. Langley?" asked her aunt as they finished their lunch. She could never come to calling him Jim.

Horatia could have kissed her for that as-

sumption that everything was all right between her and Jim.

"And by the way, a telephone message came for you here the other day. I said I didn't know when you'd be back, but I took it down."

"Funny it should come here——" said Horatia. Her aunt consulted the memorandum on her desk.

"Here it is—a Mrs. Gordon at Mercy Hospital wanted to see you."

"Sure it was I?"

"Oh, yes—I was very sure to ask and I spelt the name."

Horatia reflected. It was now early afternoon. If she went to Mercy Hospital that would be a way to get off and think—and to pass the impatient hours until—

"I must go into town to the office," she told Aunt Caroline, "but perhaps I'll come back tonight for supper, unless I have to stay at the office."

Aunt Caroline said that she hoped Horatia would be very sure to get back by half past six, and that she should expect her. She added that she hoped Horatia wouldn't tire herself out again with all that newspaper work, and she stood on the top step watching her as she had watched her that first morning when Horatia set off to work. Horatia recalled that day.

"Ah, but now," she said to herself, "I know where to look for my romance. Romance—how



stupidly I went after it—and how glorious that I know where to look for it now."

Mercy Hospital, flat, clean, yellow brick, fascinated her. Its very paint seemed deliberately sanitary at the expense of charm. She wondered who Mrs. Gordon was. She waited and finally through a maze of corridors was taken to the maternity wing. It appeared that Mrs. Gordon was a maternity case. There was some delay before she was admitted. She stood in the corridor feeling very young and unimpressive. Nurses, holding little blanket bundles, hurried past her. A smell of ether came sickishly from an open door and now, wheeled quickly and expertly, came a table with a covered form under it that was silent and still.

"Is she dead?" Horatia whispered to a nurse at the desk.

The nurse laughed.

"Oh, no indeed. Her baby just came and they're taking her back to her room. They don't die that easy."

But to Horatia it was serious. How close to death people went for their babies, she thought tremulously! To do a thing like that one must be sure of great love. Would she some day be like that silent figure? She shivered in sudden horror. A man came out of a room and paced up and down silently, his face gray with pain. The nurse, passing, spoke to him reassuringly.

"A couple of hours," she said, "she's doing fine."

The man tried to smile and failed. Horatia shivered again. This was the grim side of love. It frightened her.

"You wanted to see Mrs. Gordon?" Still another nurse beckoned. "Go down to 434. Go right in."

She opened the door a little timidly and a figure on the bed turned slowly toward her. Horatia gasped.

"Grace!"

Grace nodded and smiled. She was pale and her yellow hair in two long braids was beautiful.

"No less than Grace."

"But I never guessed."

"I didn't mean that you should. Or anyone else. That's the idea in being Mrs. Gordon."

"And you have a baby!"

"Quite a darling. Here, look at it."

She pushed the corner of the blanket back from a queer little wrinkled face. Two tiny crumpled fists lay close to the red cheeks.

"Is it a girl?"

"Yes—that's why I wanted to see you. Can I call it Horatia?"

"After me-but why after me?"

"Because," said Grace, smiling a little pathetically, "I'd like to have her be like you. Bring her up so that she would be."

Horatia recovered her poise. She sat down by the bedside.

"I shall be very proud to have that cunning



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thing have my name," she answered, "and please, may I know about it?"

"There's not much to know. It happened. Sometimes such things do happen. At first I thought I wouldn't have it. Then as I faced the idea of abortion, I couldn't. Something bigger than me—something racial, I suppose—took hold of me. So I made plans—dressed cleverly and two months ago went on my vacation—buried myself in a lodging house as Mrs. Gordon. Then I came to the hospital when it was about to come. Nobody knows what fun I had creating a character for the records."

"But will you keep it?"

"Keep it!" cried Grace, "isn't it mine? I'll keep it of course. Take it back and say I've adopted it. People will believe it—or not. But I'm pretty valuable to my work. I fancy they'll believe it or pretend that they do. What do I care if they don't?"

"And the father?" ventured Horatia. Grace's shoulders shrugged just a trifle.

"Gracious, he doesn't know about it. It's not his affair. He wasn't looking for children. It's mine. Besides I'm done with him and he knows it—months ago. As a matter of fact, Horatia, I'm done with all that."

She went on talking with her old passion for analysis.

"You mustn't imagine that this is a heavy reformation. I haven't any sense of being reformed. I don't want to be reformed. Indirectly ١

it's because of the baby, of course. I've had love and now I have my baby. I'm not as greedy as most women. I'm contented with my baby. I don't have to have love too. I have work and my child and that's all I want. You told me once that the sum total of my philosophy was wrong. And I think I've found out why. It's because it didn't have any hope—any chance in it. Since that baby came, I've had a tremendous sense of new hopes—of a chance always that a further generation can straighten things out. It's such a clean slate to write on."

"You're a wonderful woman, Grace," Horatia said, "more brave and more wonderful than almost any woman I know. I'd give anything to be as brave as you are. And I'm so proud to have your daughter bear my name."

Grace reddened a little awkwardly.

"I've talked a lot about myself," she answered, "let's have your affairs on the table. Where's Langley?"

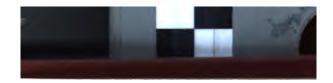
"I don't know."

"You've just come back to town?"

"I've just come back to Jim and I've not gone to the office yet. I'm going later."

"You're going to marry Jim soon?"

"If he'll have me. I've been rotten, Grace. I've been cheap. I wanted to run Jim's life—choose his friends. Then when I found I couldn't, instead of respecting his resistance or leaving him a right to decide things for himself I left him and let Anthony Wentworth make love to me.



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For a while I even let myself get weakened by Anthony—or Anthony plus his possessions. But I came to. And so I'm back here to ask Jim if he will have me."

"He'll have you," answered Grace dryly.

"But I've been so rotten—so indirect. When I think how superior I felt to you! And I've been a coward all along. Why, even now, in the hall I was fearing having children. And here you—alone—"

"Nonsense," said Grace, "you were nothing of the sort. I'm quite abnormal. Occasionally good comes out of abnormality. That in the crib is the good. But don't fool yourself into thinking that you want to be like me. No—my Horatia will be like you. Normal—struggling and lovable in her youth and as you will be—normal, sure and loved in her maturity. I'm glad you are taking Jim, though. Jim won't make you too normal, ever. Wentworth is a nice lad but not what you want. You want the divine fire burning on your own hearth. It's a hard fire to watch and keep up but together you and Jim can do it. Wentworth would only give you fires to keep you warm."

Horatia smiled in comprehension.

"I'm awfully glad I know you, Grace."

"I'll be nicer, now," admitted Grace.

"Can I hold the baby?"

She took the soft little bundle into her arms and walked to the window with it. Below the first twilight was hanging over the city. It was gray and the lights were beginning to outline the

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buildings and the streets. Far away on the other side of the city was her man. What did anything matter except that he was there? Problems, their own or society's, the struggle for existence, birth, illness, death even were glorious if you faced them gravely and with love.

The baby stirred its little fists and she held it tenderly against her. How often she had said glibly that she wanted to live, to have children, to be loved, to work? Yet how much of it had been only talk and how she had shivered when the things that went with children and life and work, pain and disappointment and questionings, had even come near her. For the first time it seemed to her that she really wanted life-wanted it full of joys and pains—wanted it beneath its romantic glamour. She felt her spirit move confidently towards the battle. Not as she had left the stone house that first morning with her heart dancing for the fun and experience. Not as she had left it this afternoon, even, quaking with hopes and fears. Now her heart was beating more steadily. less excitedly, more in time with the heart of the world into which romance and reality unceasingly pump the blood of life.

It was only the mood—the inspiration of the moment—and she knew that it would pass. But it would come again, often, though not often enough to keep the world always sunlit with glow, yet—

Gently she laid the baby in the crib and kissed Grace. "I'll come again," she promised, "and now I must go to Iim."



CHAPTER XXV

DELOW The Journal office the lake was en-D gaged on its evening's business. freighters, with lighted ends throwing their vast lengths into black relief, moved in dignity across the harbor, past the red, revolving lights into the Excursion steamers, brightly lit from top to bottom, looking like moving palaces in the distance, sailed out with their load of pleasure seekers, and little tugs steamed out cheerily to welcome the great boats which would return to harbor that night. Jim watched it as he had watched it so many nights when he was alone. He would rather be here where there was a sense of Horatia's presence than go home to the lonely rooms which held the things which he had hoped to share with her. He stood quietly before the window, his face saddened as it had looked since the day he read Jack Hubbell's letter and his eves were fixed on the moving lake before him as if he drew from it some comfort or strength. did not hear the steps on the stairs, but another listener would have noticed how eager they were and wondered at the pause before the door. It opened quietly but Jim did not turn. Then he became conscious that someone was looking at him from the door of his room. He turned and saw Horatia. She stood with her eves upon him as if she were asking something.

And for a moment each was stilled by the rush of emotions that the other roused. Then Jim knew what her question was and with his answer came into his own at last. No longer hesitant, no longer fearful, he seemed to know that she had come back to him, needing him as he needed her, seeking his embrace. He held her close, strong and jealous, and she was content. The resignation in his face had turned to a burning hunger.

"You came back to me!"

"I came back to see if you'd have me."

But he would have no such humility. He did not want humility.

"I'll never let you go again. You've had your chance. It's been hell, Horatia. I'll never let you go."

She settled into his arms, gently, happily.

"And I was all wrong," he went on; "I treated you badly. Rose Hubbell is a criminal—she's bad. When I found out I wanted to come to tell you but I wasn't sure you'd want me. I'll never see 'her again of course."

now. We don't need to hold each other by prom-

ises. We have love. It holds us."

"We have love."

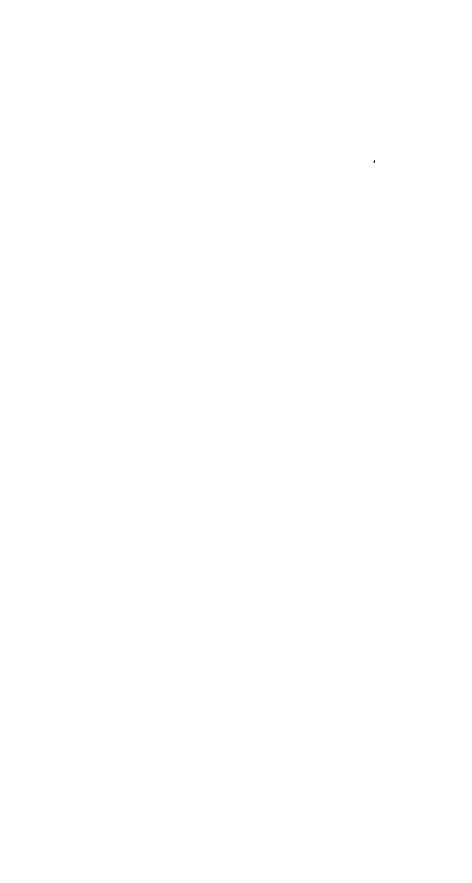
He was strong, sure as she had never seen him

in his love-making.

"We'll be married tomorrow—tomorrow. I can't wait any longer, darling," he whispered and bent to kiss her.

"Tomorrow," she breathed exultantly, with a welcome of tomorrow alight in her eyes.







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